TURN AN ELEGANT PARASOL • TURNERS AND MANUFACTURERS • TURN A WOODEN MUSHROOM

AMERICAN WOODTURNER

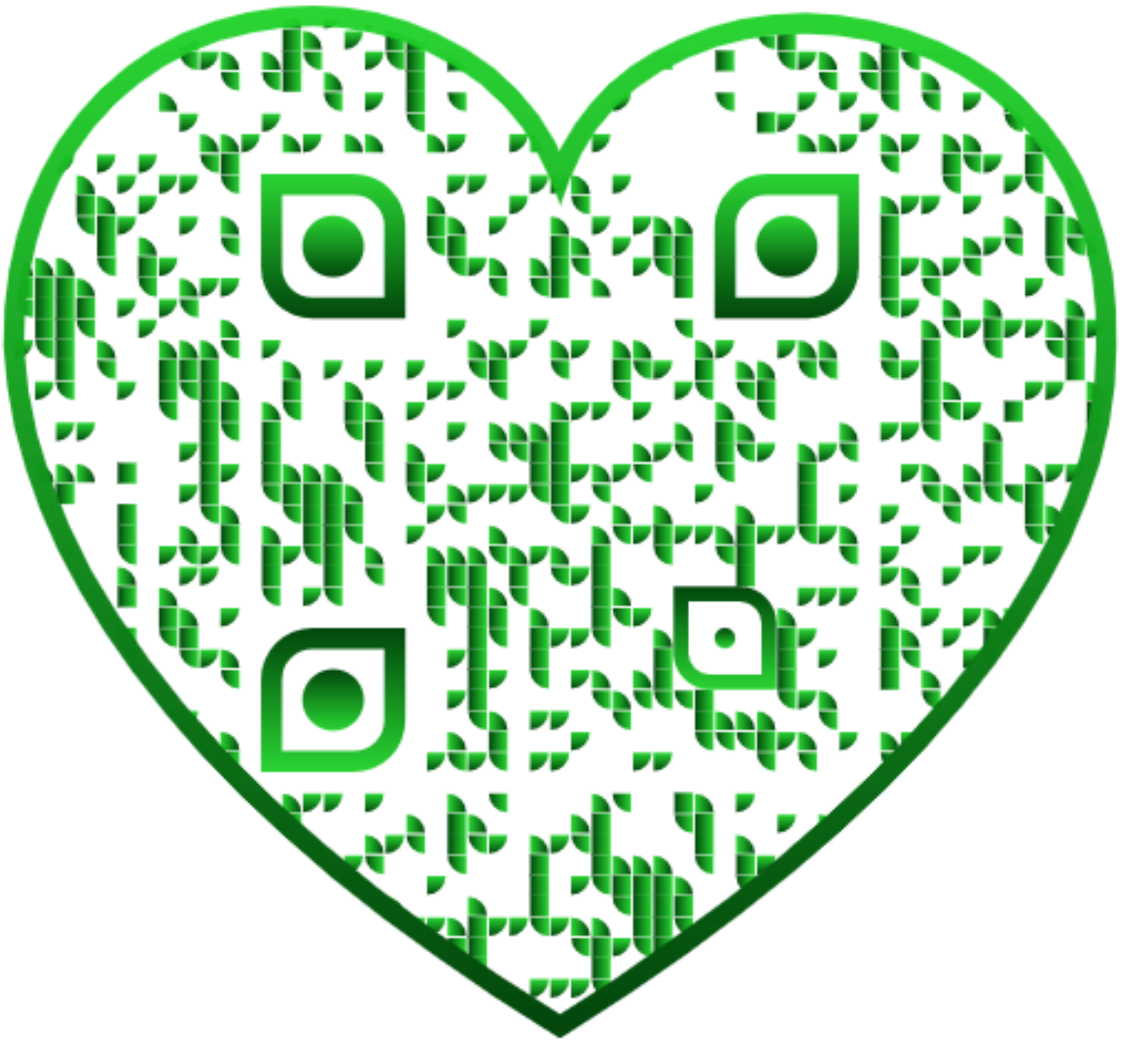
Journal of the American Association of Woodturners

February 2025 vol 40, no 1 • woodturner.org

REBECCA DEGROOT'S CREEPY CRAWLERS

TURN A TWO-SIDED VANITY MIRROR

SECOND WIND AT THE LATHE AFTER A DIRE DIAGNOSIS



Michael Sorge

Virginia

Trees are magnificent, often living beyond several human lifetimes. When a tree dies, its inherent natural beauty, its life-filled timber, can be an ongoing voice. I believe in the illimitable positive potential within each of us and focus my studies in multicultural wisdom, ancient and contemporary. This inspires my imagination to explore and evolve elegant "winged" forms intended to engage and uplift our spirits. With calm concentration, I patiently sculpt my body of work on the lathe with trained attention to form and detail.

For more, visit mikesorge.com. ■

Triple Diamond Pagoda, 2022, Bubinga, black walnut, Danish oil, buffed, 15" × 23" (38cm × 58cm)

Pagodas

Pagodas symbolize the path to heightened awareness, perception, wisdom, peace, and harmony. They represent contemplation and tranquility, which bridge the physical and spiritual worlds and elevate courageous understanding, respect, and reverence for all life.

Lotus Blossoms

Each blossom layer is individually turned for undulating flow and interplay. In my *Blossom Box* forms, the blossom serves as the lid for the hollowed box below, with a disk-shaped upper section providing an aesthetic layer and additional storage for smaller items. My *Blossom* vessels and sculptures are sometimes used as urns.

Contemporary Lotus Blossom Box, 2024, Spalted maple, black walnut, glass sphere by Kevin O'Grady, Danish oil, buffed, 11¾" × 15¼" (30cm × 39cm)

Contemporary Lotus Blossom Sculpture, 2022, Ash, black walnut, glass sphere by Scott Pernicka, Danish oil, polyurethane, 25" × 16" (64cm × 41cm)

Manta Rays

Manta rays are the largest of all rays and have the largest brains of any fish. They're elegant, intelligent, and endangered. With each box I sell, I donate 5% to the nonprofit Oceana, an advocacy organization dedicated to ocean conservation (oceana.org). After bandsawing the rough shape, I turn both sides of the manta wings while in the same spinning plane. Since the cutting is intermittent, turning them at a high rpm (around 2000) makes the turning feel more solid, and I can shape the wings without trailing-edge tearout, chipping, or fracturing.

Manta Ray Box, 2024, York gum burl, tiger maple, oak burl, Danish oil, buffed, 6" × 23½" (15cm × 60cm)

Kissing Fish

A pair of kissing fish, to me, represents truth and understanding. Their tailfins meet at each corner, forming a singing bird head and suggesting positive news and good times.

Kissing Fish Box, 2024, Spalted sugar maple, black walnut, Danish oil, buffed, 9½" × 10" (24cm × 25cm)

Terra Luna Kissing Fish Box and Vessel, 2024, Spalted maple, black walnut crotch, cherry, Danish oil, buffed, 18½" × 18½" (47cm × 47cm)

Spirit Birds

My *Spirit Bird* forms are inspired by and in honor of indigenous peoples around the world, including Native Americans, who have a deeply profound relationship with large birds of prey. For me, *Spirit Birds* represent wings of freedom, courage, and a loving spirit.

Spirit Bird, 2024, Zebrano, wenge, glass sphere by Kevin O'Grady, Danish oil, buffed, 4" × 23" (10cm × 58cm)

AAW | AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF WOODTURNERS

Mission: Strengthen and empower the global woodturning community

Vision: A world where woodturning is valued, inspirational, and accessible to all

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Journal of the American Association of Woodturners

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Back cover: Sammy Long

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For tips on article submission and photography requirements, visit tiny.cc/AWsubmissions*.

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DIVERSITY STATEMENT

The AAW strives to cultivate an organization built on mentorship, encouragement, tolerance, and mutual respect, thereby engendering a welcoming environment for all. To read AAW's full Diversity Statement, visit tiny.cc/AAWDiversity*

A NOTE ABOUT SAFETY

An accident at the lathe can happen with blinding suddenness; respiratory and other problems can build over years.

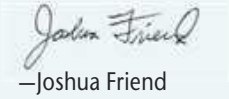
Take appropriate precautions when you turn. Safety guidelines are published online at tiny.cc/turnsafe*. Following them will help you continue to enjoy woodturning.

*Web address is case sensitive.

Editor's Note

A chapter leader asked me for guidance on quantifying what constitutes a turned item when jurying work for public display. The club's rule is that an object has to be "more than 50% turned to qualify." He said some clubs set the bar much higher than that. His concern was that with recent growth, "some of the core values and standards of the club have been eroding away."

My standard for this journal is that, yes, the lathe has to have been used in the making of a piece, but I think it's a slippery slope to dictate how much or in what way. A related concern is that "pieces don't look like they were turned." What if a piece comprises only turned elements, but they were turned on multiple axes, were cut apart and reassembled, or were carved, painted, or pierced? In public exhibitions, would you want folks to see a wide variety of works from the lathe or a narrowly defined selection? I try to be as inclusive as possible.



—Joshua Friend

From the President

Greetings

It is an honor to have been elected president of the AAW Board of Directors for 2025. I have been a Board member since mid-2021, chaired the Demonstrator Selection Committee since then, and led AAW's fundraising efforts until 2024. After joining both the AAW and the Ohio Valley Woodturners Guild in 2007, I held various chapter leadership positions, including president. I also led an initiative that founded the club's Learning Center. My personal focus in woodturning is mostly functional items—bowls, platters, and salt-and-pepper sets, with some forays into embellishment.

I would like to thank my predecessor, Mike Summerer, for his dedication to the AAW. Mike's constructive and innovative leadership as a Board member and president set a fine example that I hope to follow.

Staff transitions

As you read this, we will have hired a new executive assistant. Work may also be complete to hire a new marketing and communications director and a database administrator. A national search for a new executive director is well underway. In this year of staffing transitions, we will continue working hard to deliver quality programs and support to you, our members.

Volunteering

It is inspiring that an organization as large as the AAW, with its impressive array of programs and services, is almost entirely led by volunteers, well supported by a small but talented paid staff. Stalwart members make a huge difference in our many chapters. A huge thank you to everyone who gives of their time and works to support woodturning in any way, anywhere.

Special thanks to Dale Larson, who was the local lead for the 2024 AAW International Symposium in Portland, Oregon, and the more than 250 volunteers who filled more than 600 positions to help deliver a great event.

Strategic plan

We shared our new vision, mission, and key strategies in the December 2024 issue of the Journal (page 4) and online at the AAW members' meeting December 3, 2024. This is the first major planning effort since 2016's Vision 2020 initiative. Our latest plan will guide us for the next three to five years.

We are energized by our new vision: A world where woodturning is valued, inspirational, and accessible to all. How many of us get a quizzical expression when we say to others that we are woodturners? It is rewarding to share what we do and how we do it. We will work to elevate the exposure of woodturning to a much broader audience, which will, in turn, help to build our membership and community.

Our newly stated mission is to strengthen and empower our community. I think back to the start of the AAW and how that helped to stimulate the creation of an entire woodturning ecosystem: AAW chapters, thousands of members, new and innovating manufacturers, woodturning schools, auctions, exhibitions, collectors, participants in art fairs, and so much more. Just imagine what the woodturning world might look like in the future as we continue to strengthen our community.

The woodturning education and information we provide is of the highest quality and made to a thoughtfully established set of safety standards. There is so much "content" being created out in the world. Some can be trusted, some not. Our AAW brand means you can trust and apply what we share with confidence and safety.

There will be much more to share as we journey through delivering our plans. Your help and support is and will be critical.

I look forward to meeting many of you in Saint Paul at another great AAW Symposium this June. Your thoughts, ideas, and suggestions are always welcome.

KC Kendall
President, AAW Board of Directors
kckend@gmail.com

Call for Entries *Beginnings* 2025 AAW Member Exhibition

Submission Period: January 1 to March 15, 2025

The theme for the 2025 AAW member show is *Beginnings*. Each year, our goal is to host a Symposium exhibition that showcases and celebrates the full scope of excellent work being created by our members. This year, our theme also reflects the host state of Minnesota, home to the headwaters of the Mississippi River.

As always, artists are encouraged to interpret the theme for themselves, and we are hoping to see entries ranging from impeccably crafted "round and brown" to innovative sculptures that push the boundaries. Do you already have a piece that fits this theme perfectly? If it was made in the past two years, it is eligible.

Work will be selected through a blind jurying process. There are two cash prizes for this exhibition: the $300 Masters' Choice, selected by the jurors or their representatives, and the $200 People's Choice, selected by attendees at the AAW Symposium in Saint Paul, Minnesota, June 12-15, 2025. The show is open to any current AAW member anywhere in the world, and to full-time students in art, design, or industry-related degree programs, regardless of AAW membership status.

More information

Full details on this call for entries were published in the October 2024 issue of *American Woodturner* (vol 39, no 5, page 7). Also check the AAW's Calls for Entry page, found at tiny.cc/Calls, or email Tib Shaw at gallery@woodturner.org.

Executive Director Stepping Down

On behalf of the American Association of Woodturners Board of Directors, I want to share that Jennifer Newberg will be stepping down from her role as Executive Director in 2025. The Board of Directors is initiating a comprehensive search for her replacement, ensuring we find a qualified leader who can continue the work Jen started. Until then, Jen will remain in her role, providing leadership throughout the transition.

Through Jen's leadership, the AAW has achieved remarkable progress. A key highlight of her tenure was the development of our new strategic plan, which will guide us in the years ahead. During this time, fundraising and Symposium attendance have grown both in-person and online, our communications and resources now reach a much larger audience, and we've made significant improvements to our finances and operations.

Transitions bring opportunities for innovation and growth. With our dedicated staff, contractors, Board members, and volunteers, we're confident in continuing to deliver membership value as well as strengthening the woodturning community as a whole. Thank you for your support as we move forward together!

—KC Kendall, 2025 AAW Board President

Call for Videographers and Streaming Technicians AAW Symposium 2025

Application period: December 15, 2024, to February 15, 2025

The AAW seeks volunteer videographers and streaming technicians for its next International Woodturning Symposium in Saint Paul, Minnesota, June 12-15, 2025.

We are looking for videographers with experience with video camera equipment, who possess some technical competence and can make decisions regarding how best to capture what is being turned (camera position, shooting angle, etc.).

Streaming technicians should have experience helping AAW chapters with streaming content, such as demos and hybrid meetings. We need volunteers who can switch between cameras and manage streaming hardware.

Those accepted as videographers and/or technicians will be expected to help set up or tear down and cover six rotations at the Saint Paul Symposium in order to receive a complimentary registration.

Applications will be accepted December 15, 2024, through February 15, 2025. Those selected will be notified in March 2025. For more information or to apply, visit tiny.cc/CallVideo.

Rick Baker poses with a camera boom, Portland, Oregon, 2018.

Photo: Andi Wolfe

2025 AAW INTERNATIONAL WOODTURNING SYMPOSIUM

June 12-15 in Saint Paul, Minnesota

Photos: Andi Wolfe

AN INCREDIBLE OPPORTUNITY

Don't miss your chance to attend the biggest woodturning event in the world! With 80+ live demonstrations, presentations, and panel discussions, there is a lot to experience at the AAW International Woodturning Symposium. It features the industry's largest and most attended tradeshow, showcasing companies of all sizes, and awe-inspiring galleries, exhibitions, and auctions featuring unbelievable wood art from across the world.

- **Internationally Renowned Demonstrators –** Top woodturners from around the world will be demonstrating for woodturners of all skill levels
- **World's Largest Woodturning Tradeshow –** All of your favorite woodturning and woodworking vendors will be in one place, giving you a hands-on look at the latest and greatest products
- **A Sense of Community –** Connect with a welcoming community of woodturning hobbyists, professionals, artists, collectors, and vendors
- **Gallery, Exhibitions, and Auctions –** The largest and most unique display of awe-inspiring wood art from around the world

START MAKING PLANS

Symposium Venue

Saint Paul RiverCentre
175 West Kellogg Boulevard
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Discounted Hotel Blocks

The following hotels feature discounted rooms for this event. The hotels may sell out, so book your rooms soon. Visit the symposium website to learn more.

InterContinental St. Paul Riverfront
11 East Kellogg Boulevard, Saint Paul, MN, 55101

DoubleTree St. Paul Downtown
411 Minnesota Street, Saint Paul, MN, 55101

Holiday Inn St. Paul Downtown
175 W. 7th Street, Saint Paul, MN, 55102

VOLUNTEER!

The Symposium is only possible thanks to volunteers like you! Symposium attendees say that their experience is more meaningful when they volunteer. Sign up at AAWSymposium.org to hold your spot for volunteering.

YOUR FIRST AAW SYMPOSIUM?

Don't worry, you'll fit right in. Symposium volunteers work hard to help you feel welcome and right at home. Four of every ten attendees are brand new to the Symposium and many have been turning wood for less than two years.

Register by April 11 to get the best price and SAVE UP TO $120

SYMPOSIUM REGISTRATION

VISIT AAWSYMPOSIUM.ORG TO REGISTER. SEE YOU IN SAINT PAUL!

2025 AAW SYMPOSIUM WOODTURNING DEMONSTRATIONS

FEATURING 25 RENOWNED WOODTURNERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Stuart Batty
Colorado

Simon Begg
Australia

Michael Blankenship
Illinois

Louis Boucher
Canada

Lorin Brückin
France

Emma Cook
England

Nick Cook
Georgia

Rebecca DeGroot
Texas

Mark Dreyer
Illinois

Jim Echter
New York

Richard Findley
England

Dennis Fuge
Pennsylvania

Stewart Furini
England

Ashley Harwood
South Carolina

Phil Holtan
Minnesota

Jeff Hornung
Missouri

Michael Hosaluk
Canada

Rex Kalehoff
Luxembourg

Michael Kehs
Pennsylvania

Jeff Leudloff
Minnesota

Alain Mailland
France

Phill Sikes
Kansas

Jim Sannerud
Minnesota

Mark Sfirri
Pennsylvania

John Underhill
Illinois

DEMONSTRATION TOPICS

Bowls & Platters
Simple & Playful Scrap Wood Bowl
Bowl Turning Fundamentals
Brighton Buns (Candle Stick Bowl)
Decorative Platters
Emerging Square-Edge Bowl
From Burl to Bowl
Hand-Carved Color-Banded Bowl
Log to Lager Bowl
Push-Cut Bowl
Turning Green to Finished
Textured & Colored Platter
Volcano Bowls

Boxes
Box & Copper, a Love Story
Copper Lidded Box
Mastering Turned Lidded Boxes
Turned & Carved Cupcake Box
Box Making with a Twist
Box with Hand-Cut Screw Thread

Embellishing
Burn Carving & Texturing
Creative Use of Copper
Endgrain Bowl with Carved Feet
Get Started with Color
Start Texturing
Unplugged – Surface Embellishment
Walking Mushroom

Hollow Forms
Deep Hollow Vessels from Bottom
Enclosed Forms Using Gouges
Reinterpretation of the Canton Ball
Sculpturally Joining Turned Vessels
Walking Teapot

Inspiration & Sculpture
The Adventure Goes on Presentation
Improvisation on a Root Burl
30 Years of Wonders Presentation

Pens
Resin-Casting Pens
Pens: Beginner to Pro
Pens without Casting

Multiaxis
Mini Stool
Mark & Mikey Show – Improvisational Demo
Rings upon Rings – Kransekake
Turned & Carved Bottle
Multiaxis Wooden Bottle

Segmenting
Segmented Peppermill
Cell Phone Amplifier

Spindles & Finials
Three-Piece Ornament
Flower Show
Hand-Cut Barley-Twist Spindle
Lighted Hanging Ornament
Mini-Aquifer
Spindle Turning Fundamentals
Urchin Ornament & Stand
Xmas in June – Various Gifts

Tools & Techniques
Thread Chasing
40 Blank-Mounting Tips
Easy Design Elements with Negative-Rake Scrapers
Finish the Finish
Natural-Ingredient Finishes
German Ring
Skew Masterclass
Spindling to Better Bowls
Using Carbide Tools
Resin Casting for Woodturners

To see the full schedule, visit aawsymposium.org

AAW Chapter Awards

Application deadline: March 14, 2025

The AAW Community Impact Award

Woodturning is more than just a hobby. Many individuals and local chapters have used their talents to make significant contributions to their communities. This award recognizes chapters that have demonstrated a strong commitment to community service, outreach, and positive societal impact. The objective of this award is to acknowledge the chapters that have used their skills and passion for woodturning to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others, whether through charitable projects, educational initiatives, environmental stewardship, or other community-oriented activities.

The AAW Communications Excellence Award

Communication is essential to the growth and engagement of local woodturning chapters. This award honors chapters that demonstrate effective, creative, and innovative communications through email newsletters, websites, social media, or video content. The objective is to recognize chapters that have excelled in disseminating information, educating, and entertaining their members and non-members, as well as promoting the art and craft of woodturning through compelling and creative communication methods.

Announcement of Winners

One chapter will be selected for each award and the winners will be announced during the banquet at the 2025 AAW International Woodturning Symposium in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Each winning chapter will be awarded one complimentary registration for the AAW Symposium so they may attend and be recognized in person. The winners will also be featured in an issue of *American Woodturner* and on the AAW website, woodturner.org.

How to apply

Applications will be accepted until March 14, 2025. To learn more about the award submission requirements, evaluation process, and to apply, visit woodturner.org/awards.

Apply for an AAW Grant

AAW Grants are available to individuals, chapters, schools, and non-profit organizations. Examples include but are not limited to outreach programs and/or events to encourage youth and under-represented populations (women, minority, disabled, etc.) to learn and pursue woodturning, support of existing or developing unique woodturning programs, educational workshops or class participation, professional development opportunities, chapter projects, etc. In addition to monetary awards, up to ten mini-lathe packages are available for award each year.

Regular AAW Grants are awarded on a bi-annual basis. To be eligible, applications must be received by December 31 for grants given January through May, and by May 31 for June through December. However, Women in Turning (WIT) grants and others for under-represented populations, events, and exhibitions are awarded quarterly.

Find detailed grant descriptions and application information at tiny.cc/aawgrants. If you have questions, please contact the AAW office by calling 877-595-9094 or emailing memberservices@woodturner.org.

Call for Demonstrators for the 2026 AAW Symposium

Application period: March 1 to June 1, 2025

The AAW's 40th Annual International Woodturning Symposium will be held in Raleigh, North Carolina, June 4-7, 2026. This is a great opportunity for experienced woodturners to share their skills and techniques at the largest woodturning event of the year. **You can apply to be a demonstrator between March 1 and June 1, 2025.** Learn more about the requirements at woodturner.org/calls.

Israeli turner Eli Avisera demonstrates at the AAW International Symposium in Portland, Oregon, 2024.

Photo: Andi Wolfe

AAW Symposium Chapter Group Discount!

Five or more of your chapter members can get **$40 OFF** each registration!

We want AAW chapters to be able to send as many of their members as they can to the 2025 International Symposium in Saint Paul, Minnesota, so more people can experience the biggest woodturning event of the year. That's why we are offering a **$40 chapter discount to each member** of a group of five or more. Pull together at least five of your chapter friends and submit the form on the website (aawsymposium.org) to get your personalized discount code. Then, share the discount code with those chapter members and you can each register for a full registration at $40 off.

The AAW International Woodturning Symposium is the best event for local chapter members to learn together, make bulk purchases and connections with top vendors, and put their chapter on the map by showcasing their best work in the largest woodturning gallery anywhere. This is a great opportunity for new woodturners to accompany more experienced chapter members and soak in the wealth of knowledge from expert woodturners from around the world. Chapter leaders will have the opportunity to network with one another and share experiential knowledge to help grow chapters around the country.

Chapter discounts must be requested by June 11, 2025. Register by April 11 to get the early bird rate. To learn more, visit aawsymposium.org.

Photo: Andi Wolfe

2026 AAW Board of Directors

Call for Nominees

Application due date: May 1, 2025

The AAW offers much to its members, and we are looking for a few good people with the passion to contribute something in return. Be part of moving the AAW forward—run for a position on the AAW Board of Directors! The AAW has a volunteer nine-member Board that represents the membership. If you have been a member in good standing for the past three years, you are eligible to apply.

A slate of applicants will be presented in the August 2025 issue of *American Woodturner*, and online voting will occur during the month of August. Election results will be announced by mid-September, with the new Board term beginning in 2026.

Interested, but still have questions? We would love to talk with you! For information on nomination application requirements and the duties of Board members, email Nominating Chair Linda Britt (lbbritt@comcast.net) or call Linda at 678-642-1700. You can also find the application requirements, as well as contact info for all current Board members, at tiny.cc/Board. **All applications are due no later than May 1, 2025.**

—Linda Britt, Chair, Nominating Committee

Working to better our organization, the 2024 AAW Board of Directors, from left: Kimberly Winkle, Jay Brown, Chuck Lobaito, Mike Summerer, Linda Britt, Ron Day, Reid Zimmerman, KC Kendall, and Sally Burnett.

Photo: Andi Wolfe

FROM THE
EDITOR'S
INBOX

Send emails to
editor@woodturner.org

AAW's Women in Turning (WIT) program started in 2015 and is invested in encouraging the growth of women within woodturning. As clubs are starting the new year, often with a shift in officers and responsibilities, the WIT Committee and program invite you to designate someone in your club as a WIT liaison. That person, either female or male, is the ringleader, or point person, who invests energy in supporting woodturners who are women.

Liaisons can access information and resources WIT has developed on recruiting women, sharing information in your club with women, activities, thoughts on how to plan an activity, and a list of resources on easy- to intermediate-project teaching options from AAW. If you or a liaison candidate would like more information, visit **tiny.cc/WIT** and click on the "WIT Liaison" tab. That is a public page, so if a person is not yet an AAW member, they can still view the page.

People can join the AAW through one of the WIT grant options. Visit **tiny.cc/WIT** and click on the "Calls, Projects & Grants" tab. On becoming a member, they can continue on the path toward being your club liaison.

I am also happy to meet individually with anyone interested in exploring being a WIT liaison. Club presidents should enter any new liaison on AAW's Chapter Officers Tool Kit webpage, found at tiny.cc/officers, "Officer & Information Updates" tab, to get them in the pipeline for resources and support.

—Robin McIntyre, AAW WIT Liaison Coordinator, Cape Cod Woodturners

Whenever I am demonstrating, I am asked about the tool I am using for a technique: *What tool is that? Can I use this tool instead of that tool?* and other similar questions. My answer is always the same: Very few people walk into the Sistine Chapel, look up at the ceiling, and say, "I wonder what brush he used." If you find a tool that you are comfortable with, *is safe* for what you are doing, and gives you the result you are looking for, it is the right tool for your job.

—Ed Siegel, North Carolina

Our club displays work at our local public library every October. We always get a nice assortment of pieces from a decent share of our membership and fill the lobby display cases. This year was probably our best and I had calls and emails from old friends and neighbors commenting on it. I also had an email from a woman who said her 10-year-old son Kavi was interested in learning woodturning.

I'm not the best instructor, but I really enjoy sharing my passion for turning. Over the years, I have invited quite a few people to my shop for observation or one-on-one instruction. In this case, I invited Kavi and his mother to see a demo and stay for a hands-on session.

Kavi seemed a bit shy, but after watching me make a few cuts to make a piece of walnut round, he was eager to try it out. We whittled away at it for a bit, then he pointed out that it reminded him of a bishop (he's into chess). We made it look a little closer in shape to a bishop, and I made an angled slice to further the rough resemblance. He left with it and showed it off at school. He and his mother joined our club that Saturday morning to participate in the afternoon session. I got to work with Kavi again and helped him turn his first bowl.

I haven't been president of our chapter very long, but this was really a high point for me.

—Pete Meyer, Northwestern Michigan Woodturners

Presque Isle Woodturners' Youth Turning Event

Photos by Christian Shields.

On October 30, 2024, members of the Presque Isle Woodturners (Erie, Pennsylvania) hosted fourteen high school students from three different school districts for hands-on woodturning instruction. Our chapter had received an AAW EOG grant, and the monies went toward two high-powered woodburning units, one micro-powered carving unit, bits, burning tips, wire to make our own tips, and enough hard maple and cherry to yield 125 bowl blanks.

Students show their progress during the Presque Isle Woodturners learning event at Maplewood High School. Club volunteers, back row from left: Adelbert Sturdevant II, Isabelle Somerville, Todd Nickerson, Richard Cropp, Ken Zambrzycki, David Bettler, Mark Rose, and Terri Weidle.

Presque Isle President Mark Rose teaches a student bowl-turning (her first time ever working on a lathe).

The students arrived at Maplewood High School and were split into two groups, bowl-turning and woodburning. Club member Dick Cropp demonstrated how and why he turns bowls and, along with other Presque Isle members, worked one on one with students, helping them turn a bowl. Meanwhile, Dave Bettler shared woodburning techniques as a way of adding embellishments. (The woodburning group could work on bowls that had been pre-turned.) The groups switched places after lunch, so everyone had a turn at each activity. Splitting the group allowed us to host more students since we did not have enough lathes or burners to keep everyone busy at the same time.

Lunch was donated by the local American Legion Post 381 during which students and demonstrators had valuable time to visit and talk.

The day's events were captured by several school media students and John Last, a local TV reporter, whose report aired November 8 (view it at tiny.cc/Presque). Mark Rose, Presque Isle Woodturners President, said people began contacting him about joining the club following this exposure. The students were excited about the scope of the project and impressed us with their creativity and enthusiasm.

The students were taught woodburning as part of the day's learning.

Thank you, AAW, for the EOG grant that provided the opportunity for our local youth to grow in turning. ■

—Bert Sturdevant, Presque Isle Woodturners and Industrial Arts Instructor, Maplewood High School

Honor Flight & Space Coast Woodturners, a Grand Collaboration

In 2005, shortly after the World War II Memorial was opened in Washington D.C., Earl Morse, a physician's assistant at a Veteran's Affairs clinic in Ohio, began asking his patients if they planned to visit the site. All wished to do so, but only a few had the resources. Morse arranged with a local flying club to ferry twelve veterans to D.C. on six private aircraft. Jeff Miller, a businessman in North Carolina, was inspired by the story and expanded it to commercial flights, and Honor Flight was born. Since then, chapters have sprung up all around the country, and more than 240,000 veterans from WWII, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War have been transported to Washington D.C. to visit the memorials made in their honor.

About six years ago, I visited the Brevard County Honor Flight and saw a potential for woodturners to contribute. I initiated a project with my woodturning club, the Space Coast Woodturners in Melbourne, Florida, to collect pens turned by chapter members and distribute them to every Honor Flight participant. The club supported the effort at turning workshops. Many members provided completed pens, while others prepared blanks and contributed supplies. The collaboration reached a milestone at the October 2024 Honor Flight Reunion, with the distribution of the 1,000th pen.

In 2023, I participated in an Honor Flight in recognition of my service during the Vietnam War. My club members and I feel it is an honor to give back to those who have served our nation and kept us free. ■

Learn more at honorflight.org.

—Gary Christensen, Space Coast Woodturners

Space Coast members Chuck Ort and Gary Christensen distribute pens to Honor Flight participants.

Water Gap Woodturners Makes Toys for Project Self-Sufficiency

Over the holiday season, members of the Water Gap Woodturners (Layton, New Jersey) gathered, as they do every year, to make toys. Each year, turners of all skill levels and from various backgrounds come armed with wood, paint, string, and everything needed to make and assemble simple, classic toys for children who may not otherwise enjoy a good Christmas. At the end of the turning session, the toys are delivered to a local organization that specializes in helping families in need—Project Self-Sufficiency of Newton, New Jersey (projectselfsufficiency.org).

With multiple lathes going at once, each turner, regardless of proficiency, strives to make the best top, magic wand, yo-yo, or ball-and-cup game they can. They look forward to comparing their finished products with the others and getting and sharing tips and tricks.

Project Self-Sufficiency has always made Christmas special for local families in need with what has become The Season of Hope Toy Shop. The program accepts toy and monetary donations each year for this special event, when it displays large quantities of toys, games, books, and more. It is an impressive and inspiring sight to be sure!

The Water Gap Woodturners are thrilled to contribute to this worthy cause. Many club members used words like *meditative*, *instant gratification*, and *social* to describe some of their reasons for being part of the club. This diverse group could also add *caring*, *thoughtful*, and *kind-hearted*. Here's to the Season of Hope for all of us and the joy that a small club in the woods of Northern New Jersey spreads each year. ■

For more, visit watergapwoodturners.wordpress.com.

—Natalie B. Gooding, Water Gap Woodturners

Steve Ackman of the Water Gap Woodturners (left) presents toys made by club members to Bruce Tomlinson of Project Self-Sufficiency at their Sussex County, New Jersey, facility.

A club member puts the finishing touches on a top. Many spinning tops are turned and donated to this special cause.

Colorful magic wands and ball-and-cup games are among the club's donation to Project Self-Sufficiency.

A turned yo-yo is laser-etched with finishing touches.

Calendar of Events

Send event info to editor@woodturner.org. April issue deadline: February 15.

Alaska

May 3, 4, 2025, Alaska Woodturners Symposium, Glass Sash and Door Supply, Anchorage. Featured demonstrators Laurent Niclot (Colorado) and Andy Cole (Hawai'i), as well as others to be announced. For more, visit akwoodturners.org/symposium.

Colorado

September 19–21, 2025, Rocky Mountain Woodturning Symposium, The Ranch Larimer County Events Center, Loveland. Demonstrators to be announced, but "In 2025, we are excited to highlight a selection of talented and diverse women turners who have been historically under-represented in the field." For more, visit rmwoodturningsymposium.com.

Florida

February 14–16, 2025, Florida Woodturning Symposium, RP Funding Center, Lakeland. Demonstrators to include Kip Christensen, Phil Irons, Seri Robinson, Donna Zils-Banfield, Ron Browning, Bill Dalton, Don Geiger, and James McClure. For more, visit floridawoodturningsymposium.com.

Idaho

March 29, 30, 2025, *The Idaho Artistry in Wood and Gourds Show*, JUMP (Jack's Urban Meeting Place), Boise. Annual wood art show made possible by the Idaho Woodcarvers Guild, Treasure Valley Scrollers, Southwest Idaho Woodturners Association, and Ada County Woodworkers Association. To learn more, visit idahoartistryinwood.org.

Illinois

April 11, 12, 2025, The Midwest Pen Turners Gathering (PenMakers International Annual Symposium), Chicago Marriott Northwest, Hoffman Estates. Two full days of pen making—from beginner to advanced. For more, visit midwestpenturnersgathering.com.

September 26–28, 2025, Segmented Woodturners Symposium, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Northbrook. Demonstrators to include Robin Costelle, Tom Lohman, Malcolm Tibbetts, Curt Theobald, Steve Bonny, Martha Collins, Doug Drury, Reid Gilmore, Jeff Hornung, Gerald Jensen, Lloyd Johnson, Kip Lockhart, and Al Miotke. For more, visit segmentedwoodturners.org.

Minnesota

Multiple 2024/2025 exhibitions, AAW's Gallery of Wood Art, Landmark Center, Saint Paul:

- March 16–May 18, 2025: *Open/Closed* (2025 POP exhibition)
- August 10–November 30, 2025: *Beginnings* (AAW's 2025 member exhibition)
- Ongoing: *Touch This!; Around the Hus—Turning in Scandinavian Domestic Life; She's Tops! Selections from the Linda Ferber Collection*; vintage and historic lathes and turned items

For more, visit galleryofwoodart.org or email Tib Shaw at tib@woodturner.org.

New York

March 29, 30, 2025, Totally Turning Symposium, hosted by the Adirondack Woodturners Association, Saratoga Springs City Center, Saratoga Springs. Demonstrators to include Kirk DeHeer, Jim Echter, Kristin LeVier, Art Liestman, Keith Tompkins, Rick Angus, Stan Blanchard, Rich D'Ambrosio, Todd Gunter, and Ray Puffer. For the latest info, visit woodworker.org/about-totally-turning.

Oregon

March 14–16, 2025, Oregon Woodturning Symposium, Linn County Expo Center, Albany. Biennial event features vendor tradeshow and fifty rotations from demonstrators including Trent Bosch, Dan Tilden, Dave Gutschmidt, Craig Timmerman, Laurent Niclot, Curt Theobald, Kimberly Winkle, Kurt Hertzog, Elizabeth Weber, Rudolph Lopez, and Kevin Jesequel. For more, visit oregonwoodturningsymposium.com.

Pennsylvania

September 19–21, 2025, The Mid Atlantic Woodturning Symposium, Lancaster Marriott Hotel and Convention Center, Lancaster. Featured demonstrators to be announced. For more, visit mawts.com.

Texas

August 22–24, 2025, SWAT (Southwest Association of Turners) annual symposium, Waco Convention Center, Waco. Demonstrators to include Mike Mahoney, Mike Nish, Toni Street, Sally Ault, Lyle Jamieson, Matt Monaco, and Jerry Bennett. Registration includes lunch each day, vendor tradeshow, and instant gallery. For more, visit swaturners.org.

Bill Abendroth (Illinois), *Super Conductor Plasma Generator*, 2024, Red oak, walnut, cherry, lacquer, 66" × 19" × 13" (168cm × 48cm × 33cm)

An Online Forum Unlike Any Other: The Legacy of Herman de Vries

Donna Zils Banfield

There are many online forums dedicated to woodturning, but none are as enduring and welcoming as the World of Woodturners (WoW). The popularity of the site, **thewows.com**, is all due to the thoughtful foresight and dedication of Herman de Vries of Manitoba, Canada, who recently retired from operating WoW and handed its reins to the next generation.

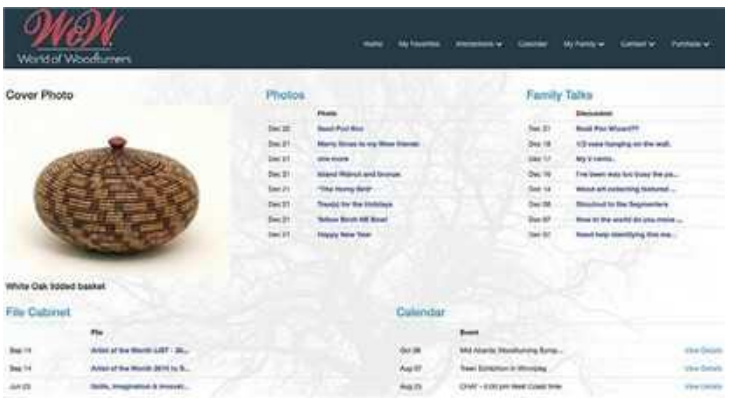
World of Woodturners founder Herman de Vries having fun at the lathe.

The birth of WoW

Herm began his woodturning journey building furniture. After a few pieces, he decided that "working in the round is more fun." He admits he never had any formal training but learned by reading books and trying his own methods. Turners today have so many opportunities to learn woodturning skills and techniques, but in the 1990s, there were far fewer resources available. There was the AAW (1986) and a few woodturning clubs, but these were still in their infancy. There was no YouTube (2005), Facebook (2004), or MySpace (2003). We had a few VHS tapes and books but no reliable online sources with instructional materials or a way to have regular, direct communications with other woodturners to share ideas, ask questions, and share images of works, either in progress or completed.

One early online source was a particular newsgroup, or bulletin board, where you could post a question, and anyone could respond. But you never knew who was responding because usernames were cryptic and true identities were hidden. Without moderators or administrators, the comments could be unhelpful, rude, or worse. Herm tried to use the site when he was learning to turn but quickly tired of the trolls and creeps.

Having come from a large family, Herm believed that the woodturning community was essentially a family. He was already using the myfamily.com website, which launched in 1998 as part of Ancestry.com. With that website as the foundation, he approached Ancestry.com and proposed starting a large "family" comprising people with common likes and interests—such as woodturning. With the green light from Ancestry.com, Herm de Vries (affectionately referred to as Papa Herm) started the World of Woodturners online community in 2001.



A recent screenshot from the WoW website, a still-thriving online forum where woodturners have found a sense of community for more than twenty years.

Built on respect

Herm wondered if there would be any interest. He reflected on the beginning, the start-up costs, and early days: "It took a couple hundred bucks, which I paid myself for a couple of years. I began sending out invites to the site, and [as people] sent me their email address and used their real

Works by Papa Herm

Buckeye Form, 2009, Buckeye, ebony, purpleheart, waterborne urethane, 16" × 4½" (41cm × 11cm)

Box Trio (inspired by the work of Bill Clark on WoW), 2021, Boxelder, ebony, holly, fabric dye, ink, black leather shoe dye, tung oil, pyrography, Largest is 6" (15cm) tall

Thuya Burl Clamshell Vase, 2016, Thuya burl, hard maple, black leather dye, carnauba wax, Danish oil, 18" × 17" × 3" (46cm × 43cm × 8cm)

name and birthdate, it expanded. It just blew up."

Mindful of lessons learned from the behaviors he saw on the newsgroups, Herm started WoW with a few key rules. First was no anonymity: you had to use your real name if you wanted to join. WoW would be a place to post a photo of your work and receive feedback and comments from other woodturners. You could share information, have discussions, and even view a calendar displaying upcoming events.

Herm knew there would be some rough patches: "Just as in any family, there would be some dust-ups and disagreements. But underneath it all, we respected and cared and had different opinions without causing a war. In the early days, there were a few roughnecks. Other members of the site would chime in when someone was trying to be a bully. Bullies don't like it when they can't bully, so they left." WoW today has a House Rules/FAQ section, and new members are strongly urged to familiarize themselves. Rule 1: Always be kind. Rule 2: No talk of religion or politics. Rule 3: You can be critical about the artist's work but not the artist.

All are welcome

An important feature of WoW, even in the very beginning, was the variety of skill levels of the participants—everyone from beginners, hobbyists and weekend turners, right up to professionals. If desired, you could request comments and feedback on your photos, and you got that feedback. WoW became a place where woodturners learned not just how to improve their skills at the lathe, but how to take better photos, build a photo booth, sell work, etc., with tips from experienced members.

When asked if it was a challenge to be a moderator and administrator on WoW, Herm responded, "Not really. In my career as a CEO, dealing with people was a major part of my job. If there was any challenge with WoW, it was having to do the moderating by email, rather than face to face." On a few occasions, a member would receive a phone call from Herm with a gentle reminder of what WoW meant—that it was a family, a community based on camaraderie and kindness.

After just a few years, WoW became home to woodturners from all over the world. There was no other truly interactive woodturning site; it was the first one, and it grew quickly. "I think the quick growth of it spoke of how important it was," said Herm. What began as an invitation-only site has become an open forum that anyone can join.

WoW almost disappeared

Around 2013, Herm learned that the My Family hosting site would be shutting down. He posted on WoW that they were going to lose their online community forum. He recalled, "As soon as I posted, WoW members responded: 'We'll contribute!' Very quickly pledges came in. I sat down and started to sketch out what the new WoW would look like. [With] the My Family site, we were locked into the look, using the same software that we couldn't change. But with this opportunity, we could design to suit our needs." ▸

Cottonwood Burl Urn, 2024, Cottonwood burl, walnut, tung oil, UV-cured epoxy, 14" × 6" (36cm × 15cm)

Birch Lidded Vase (inspired by the work of Bill Clark on WoW), 2021, Birch, pyrography, tung oil, 11½" × 6½" (29cm × 17cm)

Poplar Burl Hollow Form, 2019, Poplar burl, cherry, dye, Krylon® spray finish, 9" × 8½" (23cm × 22cm)

Threaded Cocobolo Box, 2018, Cocobolo, Manitoba maple (boxelder), carnauba wax, 5" × 3" (13cm × 8cm)

After designing a new site, however, many developers didn't want to touch it. They warned Herm that his idea was "not going to work at all" for a variety of reasons. But Herm didn't get discouraged. Eventually he found a website developer who could do the job, and today WoW is organized as a Canadian nonprofit run by a small board of directors.

For years, funding to maintain the site came from member donations. When the funds were running low, Herm would activate a "Donate" button on the site. When sufficient funds were received, the button was deactivated. And it was never active for very long. More recently, advertising focused on woodturning has helped to pay the site's bills.

The succession plan

Herm is very proud of the woodturning family he started online. He also knew he would need a succession plan. For a few years, he contemplated a number of people who might be able to take over the site's management. Then, in early 2023, Michael Anderson joined WoW. Michael was young, talented, thoughtful, and highly engaged in WoW. Although he was new to the woodturning community, he was very quickly embraced by the WoW family. Herm had found his successor.

Michael's assumption of the leadership role for WoW coincided with an influx of many new and younger makers to the forum. Herm worried that he wasn't seeing younger people entering the woodturning world, but he maintained, "If you can get a young person interested, you have a future." One of the reasons for choosing Michael was his ideas: "They were bound to be different," Herm noted, "because he's of a different generation. I wanted it to change, but for the good. Handing it over to Mike, I had to have a lot of trust."

Michael noted, "[The term] 'WoW family' gets thrown around a lot, for good reason. The community of users is supportive, honest in their critiques, and generally good spirited. Not only have I become part of the family, but the quality of my own work has improved dramatically. Through constant quality interaction with an international community of seasoned woodturners, my understanding of form and design has been refined. My toolkit has expanded. The amount of inspiration I find in pieces and the people of WoW is immeasurable."

Herm isn't going anywhere far: he is just stepping away from the day-to-day obligations. It will give him more time to be a maker in his shop—and to enjoy the benefits of being a community member of WoW, rather than one of its leaders.

All worthwhile

When asked about his most memorable experience from WoW, Herm shared that fellow woodturner Bill Neddow (now deceased) called him one day to convey his gratitude: "[I] didn't know about the outside world," said Bill. "I worked in solitude, in my workshop. Then one day someone invited me to join WoW. I want you to know how it changed my life. Now I have hundreds of friends who are young and vibrant, and they talk to me. They show me respect, and that is a change in my life that I never expected. I'm near the end of my life, and I never expected that change for me."

In Their Own Words

"My initial impression of WoW was clouded by an ugly interaction between other members. However, Papa Herm's no-nonsense diplomacy soon calmed ruffled nerves and has done so in a few incidents since. Despite hurdles along our journey, Herm's vision and exceptional character has created and maintained a global haven for wood enthusiasts/turners."
–Geoff Whaling, Australia

"[Herm,] if you lived in New Zealand, we would put your name forward for a King's Service Medal for your dedication to woodturning and WoW. I cannot thank you enough for your support and friendship. Being able to look past people's personalities, race, religion, and their political views is a skill set not held by many." –Terry Scott, New Zealand

"I joined WoW on August 23, 2005, and since then, I have never missed a day. It is the first place I go to every morning. WoW and Herm have been a driving force in my life, and I'm truly thankful that Herm started [WoW] and guided us all these years. Thanks, Papa Herm!"
–Bill Blasic, Pennsylvania

"I have actively participated in several woodturning forums over the years, but now I exclusively visit WoW because Herm keeps the site positive, welcoming, and woodturning related. Discussions are supportive of others—I cannot emphasize enough how enjoyable it is to visit WoW every day for a dose of positivity!" –Betty Scarpino, Indiana

"Herm de Vries had a vision more than twenty years ago to bring the woodturning community together in a unique way. The result was a forum unlike any other—more of family party line.... There is a reason we all refer to Herm as 'Papa Herm.' He adopted a family of creatives who helped each other to grow in their craft and art."
–Andi Wolfe, Ohio

"I have been on WoW for more than twenty years. It has become the best second family a turner could ever hope to have. [WoW members] have friends around the globe we have never met. We get together for a WoW swap at all of the symposiums. [The discussions on the forum] can and do help WoWies grow in their talent. You are encouraged to experiment and take chances. Look at over twenty years of photos of a particular person's work and you can see the changes. There is no better place for a turner to be than the World of Woodturners that Herm de Vries created."
–Kelly Dunn, Hawai'i

"I have been a WOWie since 2014. From the beginning, Herm and the WoW family have been an invaluable addition to my creative world. If I could sum it up with a single word, it would be respect. With a gentle manner and an even hand, Herm created a space in which woodturning artists at all levels could share and learn... and enjoy respect. I have watched newbies, including myself, seek and get advice. I have watched those same newbies grow into their craft and become great craftspeople and artists. The members of the WoW family always put their best foot forward and appreciate the stage Papa Herm provided for them. I am sure he had to wield the hook on occasion, but we never knew about it. That is grace at many levels."
–Jerry Bennett, Texas

Donna Zils Banfield has been a member of the WoW community since 2005 and is currently a member of the WoW Cover Team. She is also a member of the Turning of the Week Team on the AAW Forum. To learn more about Donna's work, visit livealifelessordinary.com.

TIPS

Tips

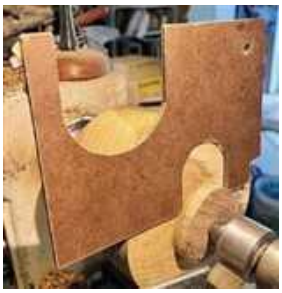
Share your turning ideas!

If we publish your tip, we'll pay you $35. Email your tips along with relevant photos or illustrations to editor@woodturner.org. —Joshua Friend, Editor

Size chucking tenons confidently

Here is a simple solution for sizing tenons. You no longer have to dig out the caliper to measure the tenon to make sure it's not too large or too small for your chuck. A jig can be made of scrap wood, in this case, hardboard, with slots cut for the maximum and minimum size tenons to fit your chuck. With the lathe stopped, slip it over the tenon while the blank is still mounted. If the tenon slides into the larger slot but not the small one, then the tenon will fit into the chuck. To achieve the chuck jaws' best gripping power, the tenon ideally should be close to the smaller size.

—Ray Kallman, Virginia, AAW member since 2002



Basement floor jack stabilizes lathe

My lathe is a 12" × 24" (30cm × 61cm) size, and I wanted it to be movable in my garage, so I put it on a metal-framed table. There are adjustable casters mounted on the base that can be raised or lowered easily. Rather than use the lathe "unanchored" or load the base with heavy weights for stability, I came up with a low-cost and simple alternative—stabilize the lathe table with a standard basement floor jack (*Photo 1*).

I mounted a length of 4" × 4" (10cm × 10cm) board across two truss bottoms in the ceiling (*Photo 2*). This board can be angled as needed to achieve the proper location—aligned with the lathe table directly behind the headstock. Floor jacks come with two metal plates that the jack sits in. One plate is attached to the ceiling board, and the other to the lathe table. The jack is simply positioned between the two plates and adjusted as needed for a tight fit against the ceiling.

1

2

This setup works perfectly. There is no serious vibration or jumping of the lathe during turning. I believe this jack setup could be adapted to many lighter-weight lathes, even those with legs. For example, a wood plate or cap could be placed on the headstock top, or a metal extension could be bolted to a rear leg upon which the jack base is placed.

—Phil Lapin, Oregon, AAW member since 2018

Clothes pins prevent orphaned gloves

I was constantly losing one of my turning or work gloves, wasting time looking for the missing mate. So now when they're being stored or not in use, I clip them together with a spring-loaded clothes pin. Not only does the clothes pin keep the two gloves together, but the two-glove bundle also makes them easier to find when I need them.

—Rich Sabreen, Connecticut, AAW member since 2015

Laser-pointer depth finder

I made a turning depth finder to help me locate the bottom of a bowl or hollow form on the *exterior* of the turning. This helps to prevent accidentally turning a hole in the bottom. One thing I like about this depth finder is that it works very well on natural-edge turnings, whose bottom depth can be difficult to gauge.

A right-angle holder made of wood houses two threaded rods, one that projects into the bottom of the turning and another that secures a laser pen at its tip with a pipe ground clamp (*Photos 1, 2*). A tenon, or cleat, on the bottom of the wood holder allows it to slide along the lathe bed. The upper rod holding the laser pointer must be adjusted so the laser light just passes by the end of the lower threaded rod.

With the lathe off, slide the depth finder along the lathe bed so the lower rod touches the inside bottom of the turning. Then turn on the laser light and mark where the light hits the exterior of the bowl (*Photo 3*). This is a useful reference point as you complete the exterior base of the turning.

—Andy Greif, New Mexico, AAW member since 2022

Leave a flap on tape roll

Peeling up the backing on double-sided turner's tape can be very difficult and frustrating (*Photo 1*). Over time, I have learned to leave a flap on my roll of tape, making it easy to peel off the backing (*Photo 2*).

I create the flap when I cut tape off of the roll, but I do not cut the tape and backing in the same place. The key is to cut them separately. Cut just the tape first and leave the backing longer to create the flap. Now the tape will be ready for efficient use the next time you mount work using this method (*Photo 3*).

—Carl Ford, New York, AAW member since 2001

Challenging!

A flap makes it easy to peel off the backing.

Parallel clamp aligns carbide cutter

With the many different sources of carbide cutter heads for lathe chisels, it is sometimes challenging to align the cutter properly with the tool shaft. To make the job easier, I use a parallel, or handscrew, clamp to hold the cutter head in the exact position needed. The clamp keeps the parts aligned while I tighten the holding screw.

—Dustin Davis, Maryland, AAW member since 2009

Duct zip ties reinforce paper glue joints

While making a three-legged bowl, I had paper joints blow up twice and hit my faceshield. Beyond scary! Paper glue joints are not known for strength. Quite the opposite, they are meant to be taken apart. I learned from a fellow turner how to reinforce paper glue joints with duct zip ties, or cable ties. These come in 36" (91cm) and longer lengths and are very strong. I wrapped a zip tie around my glue-up and covered it with duct tape. I felt a lot safer turning my project. Unlike a metal radiator clamp, these plastic ties snug up tight to the wood. Plus, there are tools available at nominal cost made for cutting these ties loose.

—Jim Meizelis, Illinois, AAW member since 2004

Turn a Two-Sided *Vanity Mirror*

Tim Heil and Gary Legwold

My wife and three daughters share a vanity mirror, the kind that sits on the bathroom counter and can "toggle" between magnification and no magnification. I challenged myself to turn a similar makeup mirror on the lathe. It is a relatively straightforward project, looks great, and makes for a wonderful gift.

My mirror is two-sided. One side features a flat mirror, which reflects normally, and the other side, a concave mirror, which has the effect of magnifying the reflection. The basic process involves turning a frame with a recess on both sides to hold the mirrors. A turned base and pedestal support the frame, and a half-hoop holds the frame and allows you to flip from the regular mirror to the magnifying mirror.

You can find round mirrors for sale on the internet, but I found it challenging to find a concave mirror of sufficient diameter. So I simply bought a cheap, fully assembled vanity mirror of the correct size and repurposed the glass in my turned frame. In my experience, the glass in a store-bought unit is just glued in and can be released easily by soaking it in boiling water (*Photo 1*). I tried to disassemble some store-bought mirrors by manually separating the glass from its frame, only to break the glass. Heating it in boiling water should do the trick.

Turn the frame

I made the frame from ¾"- (19mm-) thick Baltic birch plywood, which is free of the voids found in regular plywood. Rough-cut a circle 11" (28cm) in diameter (I used a bandsaw), and use a compass to draw a 10"- (25cm-) diameter circle on the plywood. Next, drill a hole through the center of that circle (*Photo 2*). With the workpiece mounted on a faceplate, use a parting tool or sharp gouge to reduce the outside diameter to the 10" circle. Note that plywood dulls tool edges quickly, so be sure to sharpen often.

Next, create a shallow recess to accept the flat, regular, mirror. The diameter of the mirrors I used is 9¼" (23cm). With a 10"-diameter frame, this meant that I'd have a ⅜"- (9.5mm-) wide border around the glass after it was installed. Use a parting tool to establish the border edge and then a small bowl gouge to turn the recess (*Photo 3*). The arrow in the photo shows the direction of the pull cut I used to remove wood.

Reverse-mount frame

After forming a flat recess for the regular-shaped mirror, reverse-mount the frame so you can form a scooped recess for the concave mirror on the other side. I removed the faceplate and repositioned it centered in the flat recess I had just turned.

Repurpose a store-bought mirror

The author repurposes a store-bought vanity mirror for this project. To loosen its adhesive and remove the mirror from its frame, soak it in boiling water until it slides free.

My concave mirror had the same diameter as the flat mirror, but it dips 3⁄16" (5mm) at the center. Turn the recess in the frame to fit the curved back of your concave mirror. Again, I started the recess with a parting tool and then used a bowl gouge to remove the bulk of the material. Work patiently and make intentional cuts, regularly turning off the lathe to test-fit the concave mirror in its scooped opening. Make sure the mirror does not wobble in place.

I sanded the entire frame to 240-grit abrasive.

Drill mounting holes

When the mirror is fully assembled, the frame will be mounted on the half-hoop, so you will have to drill two holes to accept mounting hardware. Secure the sanded frame with a clamp and mark the halfway point of the circumference on each side of the frame (*Photo 4*). Drill a hole ½" (13mm) in diameter at the two halfway points. Use a bradpoint bit for precision, and drill ⅜" deep, centered on the edge of the frame.

Glue threaded inserts into the two holes in the frame (*Photo 5*). Normally, a threaded insert is "screwed" into an appropriately sized hole. But in this application, the pressure exerted when screwing in the insert would likely crack the plywood frame. To prevent this from happening, make the hole slightly larger so the insert will slide in easily. Then secure it with either cyanoacrylate (CA) glue or a two-part epoxy.

Turn the base and pedestal

To start making the base, rough-cut a piece of hardwood 7" (18cm) in diameter and at least 1½" (38mm) thick. Center the wood on a faceplate with the grain running perpendicular to the bed ways (faceplate orientation), and then use the lathe's tailstock to drill a ¼" (6mm) ▸

Establish frame, drill center hole

2

The mirror frame, in Baltic birch plywood, is rough-shaped with its final diameter drawn onto the blank. Drill a ¼"-diameter hole through the center.

Form recesses in frame

3

After turning the frame to its final outside diameter, the author makes pull cuts with a gouge to form a recess for the mirror. Not shown, a parting tool is useful for establishing a straight-in cut at the outer edge of the recess. Repeat this procedure on the other side of the frame for the second, concave mirror.

Add threaded inserts

4

Holding the turned frame safely in a clamp, drill two ½"-diameter holes opposite each other in the frame's outer edge.

5

Glue in threaded inserts flush to the frame edge.

Drill and turn the base

6

7

Drill a ¼"-diameter hole all the way through the center of the base, then use a gouge to turn a dish shape to hold jewelry items.

Drill and turn the pedestal

8

Drill a ¼"-diameter hole all the way through the pedestal. The author starts with a normal-length bit and then completes the hole with a longer bit.

9

Turn the pedestal spindle, supporting the work with a cone center in the hole just drilled.

Prepare to turn hoop

10

11

The jam chuck, or sacrificial wood faceplate, is a plywood disk mounted on the lathe. The hoop material is mounted on the faceplate with double-sided tape and supported with tailstock pressure. The marked red line indicates the area of wood that will become the hoop.

hole through the wood (*Photo 6*). Pictured is ambrosia maple, and I have also used curly maple. After drilling the hole, turn the outer diameter to 6" (15cm). With the wood in this orientation, you will be cutting endgrain twice with every rotation, and you might get some tearout; however, only light sanding will be necessary if you make light, intentional cuts with a sharp tool.

After turning, the base thickness is about 1" (25mm). The goal is to turn a pleasing shape with a dish on the interior to hold hair clips, earrings, or other small jewelry items (*Photo 7*). The area in the center that will support the pedestal should be at least 2" in diameter and flat. Sand the base to 240 grit.

To turn the pedestal, start with a blank of hardwood 2" (5cm) square and 8" (20cm) long, mounted between centers. Turn a tenon on one end and remount the work in a scroll chuck, which secures the piece so you can drill a ¼" hole through the length of the workpiece. To ensure this hole is drilled straight, start with a 4"- (10cm-) long brad-point bit, then switch to a longer bit (*Photo 8*). If you start with the longer bit, it may flex while drilling and go off center.

With the spindle mounted and a hole drilled through the middle, shape the pedestal with a roughing gouge and spindle gouge (*Photo 9*). The pedestal should be about 2" in diameter at the bottom and about 1" in diameter at the top. The overall shape should appear uplifting with a resolved form. Sand to 220 grit and part it off the lathe.

Turn the half-hoop

To make the half-hoop, I turned a full hoop out of Baltic birch plywood and then cut it in half. As noted, my mirror frame is 10" in diameter, so

I made the hoop 10¾" (27cm) inside diameter and 11½" (29cm) outside diameter. This left a gap of ⅜" between the frame and the hoop, with a hoop thickness of ⅜".

I made a sacrificial faceplate out of plywood 14" (36cm) in diameter and mounted it on the lathe using a metal faceplate. Next, I cut a circle out of Baltic birch plywood 12" (30cm) in diameter and adhered it to the wood faceplate using double-sided tape. Mark the inside and outside diameters of the hoop with a red marker to show the outline of the hoop (*Photos 10, 11*).

Using a parting tool, turn away the Baltic birch plywood from each side of the red-marked area. When the wood is turned down to the depth of the sacrificial faceplate, the remaining wood will be a Baltic birch plywood hoop (*Photo 12*). After sanding away the red marker, use a paint scraper to pry the hoop free from the two-sided tape *(Photo 13*).

To end up with a half-hoop, mark two halfway points on the hoop's circumference. An easy way to find the hoop circumference is to measure with flexible sewer's tape.

At the two marked halfway points, drill a hole ¼" in diameter through the edge of the hoop. Then cut the hoop apart about ⅝" (16mm) above each hole (*Photo 14*). Note that the hoop will actually be slightly greater than half a circle. Sand all surfaces to 240 grit.

Assembly

Use a flexible glue such as E6000 to adhere the mirrors into the wood frame recesses (*Photo 15*). Since the glue remains flexible after it dries, it can move with the wood and will help to prevent mirror breakage. ▸

Turn the hoop

12

13

Use a parting tool to cut on either side of the red area to form the hoop. Slow the lathe as the hoop is cut free.

Drill and cut hoop

14

Drill holes opposite each other on the hoop. Mark the cutlines ⅝" above each hole, then cut the hoop into a half-hoop.

Adhere mirrors to frame

15

Glue both mirrors into the frame, one on each side, using a flexible adhesive such as E6000 glue. Note that the mirror is pictured here with a protective sheet yet to be removed.

Parts ready for assembly

16

Gather all of the parts: frame with mirrors, half-hoop, pedestal, base, and hardware.

Attach frame to hoop

17

Using thumbscrews and washers, attach the frame to the half-hoop.

Connect base and pedestal

18

19

A connecting bolt passes through the half-hoop, pedestal, and base and is secured with a nut under the base.

Although the Baltic birch plywood will not move as much as solid wood due to seasonal changes in humidity, using a flexible glue is a good precaution.

Gather all parts needed for assembly (*Photo 16*). Hardware and specialty woodworking stores offer a selection of thumbscrews, washers that serve as spacers, and long connecting bolts with nuts. To attach the hoop to the frame, I passed thumbscrews through the holes and spacers and screwed them into the threaded inserts in the frame (*Photo 17*).

Use the sewer's tape to measure half the distance between the thumbscrew holes, and drill a hole to insert a 7"- (18cm-) long connecting bolt through the half hoop (*Photos 18, 19*). Run the connecting bolt down through the pedestal and the base. I used a paddle bit to bore a recessed hole in the bottom of the base wide enough to allow me to tighten a nut to the connecting bolt.

I used a water-based clear gloss finish because it doesn't yellow the wood (*Photo 20*). Plus, I know it wears well in a humid bathroom environment.

The best part of this project was giving the mirrors to members of my family and knowing they will enjoy using them. ■

Tim Heil was introduced to woodturning in junior high school woodshop in 1966. He joined the AAW and the Minnesota Woodturners in 2002, and that put his woodturning skills in high gear. His favorite wood is lilac.

Gary Legwold is a Minneapolis-based author as well as a member of the Minnesota Woodturners Association and the AAW. His beautiful lefse rolling pins, books, and other lefse-related products are available at lefseking.com.

20

Completed mirrors

Makeup mirrors complete with a gloss water-based finish.

Shop Assist: Ceiling-Mounted Rails

Dennis Belcher

If you turn green wood, you might have faced the challenge of hoisting and positioning heavy turning blanks on the lathe without hurting yourself or damaging your equipment. Whenever I have set up a workshop, I have installed rails on the ceiling to help with the heavy lifting.

The system

Steel channel, such as Atkore's Unistrut or ABB's Superstrut®, can be found in the electrical section of larger hardware or big box stores or online. The channel should be installed by bolting support brackets into the ceiling rafters to ensure the system will bear the weight of heavy items (*Photo 1*). Take care that the channel is spread across multiple rafters to distribute the weight and the support limits of your shop's framing are not exceeded. Trolleys outfitted with heavy-duty ball-bearing wheels roll along the rails (*Photo 2*).

Be sure the rail extends far enough past where you want to lift something. For example, if you are hoisting a large turning blank onto the lathe, be sure the placement of the channel allows you to pick up the blank from the floor and deliver it to the lathe's headstock (*Photos 3, 4*).

There are other heavy items to lift in the shop, too, such as when setting up or moving a large lathe or other pieces of machinery (*Photo 5*).

Another use

In my new shop, I went a step further and installed rails in an XY configuration. This allows me to hang a camera, lights, and other gear from the ceiling for when I do interactive remote demos (IRDs), freeing up significant floor space. My setup has two plywood platforms that hang from the rails with a trolley at each corner. The trolleys allow the platforms to move forward or backward. When the area is being used for woodturning, the platforms are moved out of the way to one end. When the area changes to a video studio, they are moved into place to hold lights, monitors, and cameras (*Photo 6*). ■

Dennis Belcher retired from a career in the investment world to his lifelong passion of working with wood. Dennis is a member of the Wilmington Area Woodturners Association (North Carolina) and the AAW. You can contact him at dennis.m.belcher@gmail.com, or visit his website, dennisbelcher.com.

The system

1

2

(*1*) Mounting brackets bolted into ceiling rafters ensure sufficient weight-bearing strength.

(*2*) Heavy-duty trolleys ride inside the rails.

Two hoisting methods

3

Multiple rails mounted in an XY configuration afford greater positioning flexibility. A manually operated come-a-long allows for precise positioning to the lathe's spindle height.

4

A single rail in conjunction with an electric hoist does the job but limits flexibility and precision.

Shop setup

5

The author uses the system to lift a lathe's bed ways, headstock, and motor for positioning onto the legs.

Other uses

6

The author's XY rail setup allows lights and cameras to be ceiling-mounted and easily slid out of the way when not needed, saving valuable floor space.

TURN A WOODEN MUSHROOM

Asaf Peled

There is a joke about a certain kind of mushroom: eat it just once, and it's enough to feed you for the rest of your life. Applied to the woodshop: Turning a wooden mushroom can keep a woodturner busy and satisfied for an entire hour. Let me take you on a "trip" into mushroom turning.

It all started from a spore

The inspiration for my mushroom series came from a set of three simple mushrooms I turned as a gift for a friend who is a home decorator and designer. One day, she called to ask if I'd sell the mushrooms to one of her clients. She planned to use them as decorative pieces in a photo shoot, and the client was enchanted. Receiving such recognition from a stranger encouraged me to further develop the mushroom design and include it in my saleable collection.

After a year of selling at art fairs, I have observed that these mushrooms consistently inspire dramatic and positive reactions from passersby. There is something about their shape that stirs strong emotions, though I can't quite put my finger on why.

Mushroom design

Often when witnessing a discussion about a nicely turned piece, I notice that turners focus on technique: "How did you hold that?" or "Which tool did you use?" Yet, questions about design—such as "Why did you make the foot that size?"—are less common. To me, this reflects a misconception that design is an innate quality of the creator—something you either have or you don't have. In reality, design and aesthetics are skills that can be taught and refined, just like technical skills, as they are in universities and art schools. Here are the core guidelines I follow when turning mushrooms:

- A thin, ogee-shaped cap (mushroom head)
- A teardrop-shaped stipe (stem)
- A golden ratio proportion (1:1.6) between the cap diameter and mushroom height
- A golden ratio proportion between the cap height and the mushroom height
- A non-perfect, slightly irregular cap circumference for a more organic look

Following these principles does not mean creating identical pieces. Just as music has its harmonies, every piece has its unique rhythm.

Foraging lumber

Now for some bad news: plain wood blanks won't work for this project. They may technically work, but the result won't have the same "magic mushroom" quality. Instead, you should forage for branches—the same ones you might normally discard when harvesting wood for bowls.

Look for branches 1¼" to 4" (3cm to 10cm) in diameter, preferably with the bark intact; slightly irregular, or amorphous, circumferences (*Photo 1*); interesting wood textures for natural patterns and depth; and fresh, green wood for flexibility. Thin-turned green wood often warps as it dries, giving the mushroom a more organic, natural

1

Desirable branch stock

Wood selection. Branches with irregular circumferences and patterns are best for mushrooms. Perfectly round branches work but are less visually appealing.

look. Trees with textured bark, such as pecan or oak, work particularly well.

The truffle shuffle

Turning a mushroom on the lathe may seem like a straightforward spindle-turning project, but there are a few challenges to be aware of specific to this form:

- Undercutting the cap: This requires the tool to extend far over the toolrest, which might lead to a catch, and removing endgrain creates stress that could cause the work to come out of the chuck.
- Removing wood against an open space: Turning the stem is done against the finished cap, and any slip of the tool in that direction can send the piece flying like a mushroom-shaped firework.
- Navigating tight tool access and small angles.
- Avoiding sanding mishaps: the rotating cap acts like a micro-table saw that can easily cut your fingers.

But don't worry—I will share helpful tips to make the process manageable and safer.

Tools for the job

Here are some specific tools I use when turning a mushroom:

- ⅛" (3mm) parting tool
- ⅜" (9.5mm) diamond parting tool (less likely to catch when working on the inside of the cap)
- ⅝" (16mm) spindle gouge, sharpened to a 40-degree angle with swept-back wings, as shown in *Photo 2*. This versatile tool is ideal for detailed work and shear cuts, functioning similarly to a skew. Its large diameter helps minimize vibrations when working at a distance from the toolrest.

Keep your tools razor-sharp throughout the process!

Step 1: Rough-turn

Once you have selected a branch, mount it on the lathe between centers. Begin by turning the cap. This initial turning can be rough, as the final shaping will be completed after the piece is remounted in the chuck. Create a pleasing ogee shape, and leave extra material where the tailstock presses against the wood—you will need to remove the mark it leaves later.

Carefully remove the bark at the lower part of the branch, leaving a strip of bark about ⅜" wide along the edge. When doing this, start with a precise V-groove cut to ensure your gouge does not accidentally strip off the remaining bark (*Photo 3*).

When shaping the cap, aim for proportions that follow the golden ratio between the cap's height and the mushroom's overall height (*Photo 4*). This principle creates a naturally pleasing balance. Be sure to account for material lost when finalizing the base, such as tailstock marks and tenon removal.

Step 2: Secure bark

Once you have rough-turned the mushroom blank, remove it from the lathe and apply thin CA (cyanoacrylate) glue to the bark and the edge of the cap. This helps secure the bark to the wood and reduces the chances of it peeling off during the turning process (*Photo 5*).

Wood harvested during winter, when the tree is dormant, will yield the best results for retaining the bark. During colder months, the sap flow is reduced, making the bark less likely to separate from the wood.

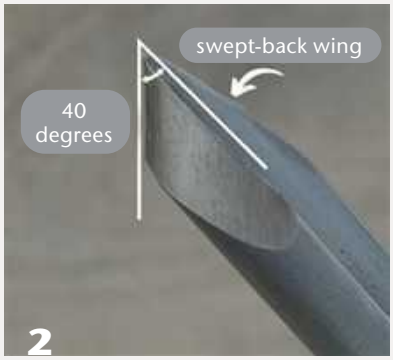
Step 3: Turn cap top

Mount the workpiece in a scroll chuck and use the tailstock mark to center it as accurately as possible.

For small mushrooms, I typically shape the top of the cap without tailstock support. For larger pieces, I keep the tailstock in place and skip ahead to the next step: the undercut.

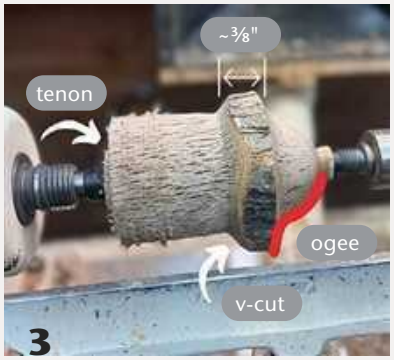
Refine the ogee shape of the cap and remove the small nub left at the top. Make sure the convex curve (outward ▸

Gouge geometry



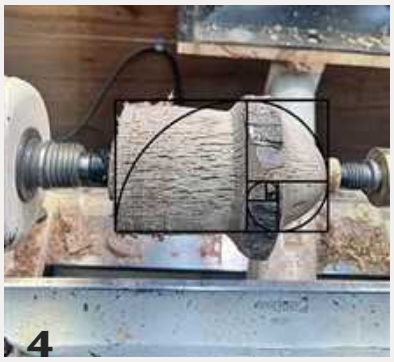
The author's preferred spindle-gouge grind, useful for hollowing under the mushroom cap.

Rough-turn mushroom



Rough-turn the mushroom to its basic dimensions and elements, leaving the bark intact if possible.

Golden ratio proportions



Applying the golden ratio (1 to 1.6) helps to establish pleasing proportions between the cap and overall mushroom height.

bulging) flows smoothly into the concave curve (inward curving) without interruptions such as flat spots or abrupt changes. This fluidity is key to achieving a natural and pleasing appearance (*Photo 6*).

While an ogee is my preferred shape for the cap, feel free to experiment with others that suit your style. Just ensure the overall proportions continue to follow the golden ratio.

Step 4: Hollow the cap

Now for the tricky part—undercutting, or hollowing, the cap. First make a straight-in cut just below the rim with a diamond parting tool. A sharp tool is essential to preventing bark separation.

The second cut should be slightly angled into the cap, establishing the desired rim thickness: about ⅛" (3mm) for small mushrooms and about 3⁄16" (5mm) for larger ones (*Photo 7*).

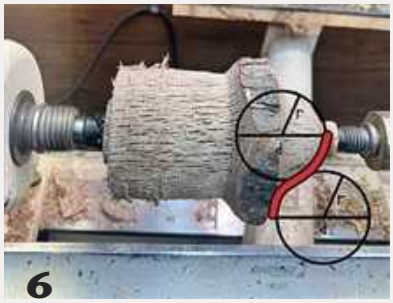
Continue using the diamond parting tool to remove more material from the mid-stem, creating a wider approach angle for hollowing the cap. Leave enough mass to support the hollowing process and avoid cutting too deeply.

Proceed to hollow the cap and create the stem in small, controlled bites, ensuring you don't stress the full width of the tool. With every pass, the tool should go in a wider angle and a bit deeper. This should result in a stepped neck (*Photo 8*). If you skipped Step 3, now is the time to go back and finish the cap.

Secure bark with glue

The author applies CA glue around the bark to increase the chances of it staying intact.

Anatomy of an ogee curve



The top of the mushroom cap follows an ogee shape—the blending of two curves with different radii.

When you sense that the wide parting tool has reached its limits (vibrations, squeaking noises), switch to a narrower parting tool to further refine the approach angle and depth. The final pass should align with the outer ogee curve (*Photo 9*). Take extra care to avoid tool catches. Always tilt the parting tool slightly to the left to reduce the risk of the tool skidding back.

Step 5: Turn the stipe (stem)

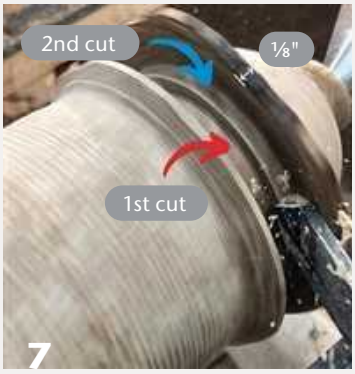
Use a detail gouge to shape the stem. I usually aim for a teardrop shape. As always, keep in mind design principles like proportion, golden ratios, and smooth transitions.

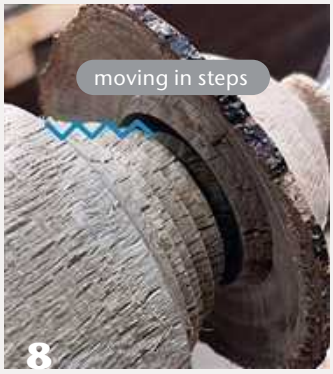
The main challenge here is turning against the hollowed-out cap. The delicate, unsupported end grain can snap suddenly, sending your gouge straight into the thin and fragile cap. Trust me, you don't want this to happen—it's a surefire way to ruin your mushroom and your day (*Photo 10*).

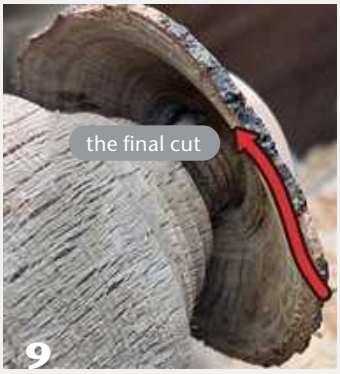
While turning the lower portion of the stem is relatively straightforward, creating a flowing curve on the upper stem demands more attention and skill. Here is the process I recommend:

1. Present the spindle gouge slightly above the top of the stem, with the flute open to the 11 o'clock position, as shown in *Photo 11*.
2. Gently engage the wood, and start sweeping the tool backward. Use the left wing of the gouge as if it were a skew, focusing on a smooth, clean cut.

Undercut mushroom cap





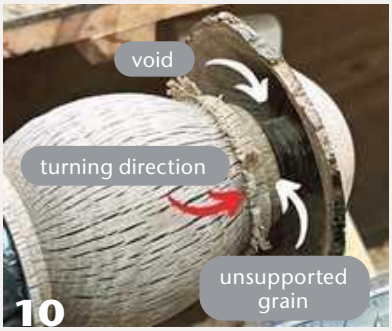


(7) The first two cuts, made with a diamond parting tool, are key to preserving the bark and setting the cap's thickness.

(8) Create a rough sampled/discrete curve by making a stepped pattern with the parting tool.

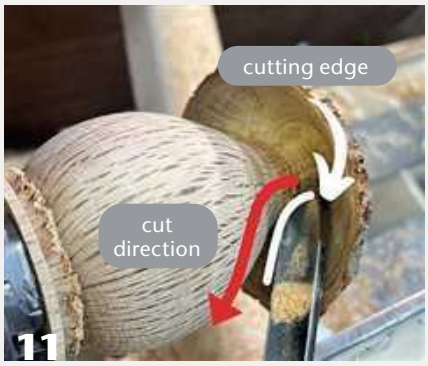
(9) The line shows the direction of the final cut into the bottom of the cap.

Turn the stem



Turning the section of the stem near the top means cutting into the void without grain support. Proceed with caution and take light cuts with a sharp tool.

A smooth transition



Gouge presentation and movement for turning the upper stem.

The desired outcome of the gouge-turning technique: a smooth transition from stem to cap.

3. Keep the gouge at a 45-degree angle to achieve a shear cut. Ensure that the wing maintains contact with the wood throughout this motion.
4. Merge the curves. As you pull the tool back toward the bottom of the stem, focus on blending the upper and lower curves into a seamless flow. This will create a natural, harmonic transition between the cap and the stem.

This maneuver might take some practice (and a few trial runs), but the result is worth the effort—a beautifully flowing stem that complements the cap's elegance (*Photo 12*).

Step 6: Sand and finish

Here is how to approach the sanding in a safe and effective manner.

The cap

For the inner cap, take a piece of sandpaper and stretch it over one finger. Gently press it against the wood while keeping your hand steady and away from the live-edge rim. Use finer grits progressively to smooth the surface (*Photo 13*). The top of the cap can be sanded more easily and even power-sanded if you prefer. However, maintain a light touch to avoid the spinning piece catching and throwing your hand off balance.

The stem

Sand the stem carefully, as it is close to both the chuck and the cap. Use small pieces of sandpaper or sanding sticks to control your movements and avoid slipping. A steady, gradual approach will help achieve a clean, smooth finish.

Part off and finish

When parting the mushroom from the lathe, use a parting tool to create a clean separation between the stem and the waste block. As you approach the final cut, form a shallow concave area at the bottom of the stem to ensure the mushroom sits evenly on a flat surface.

Since this is a decorative piece, the choice of finish is flexible. You can use oil, wax, or even a spray finish depending on your preference and the look you want to achieve.

One final note—while the mushroom might look good enough to eat (*Photo 14*), remind yourself (and others) that it's for the eyes only! ■

Asaf Peled crossed paths with woodturning seven years ago, and it has been a love affair ever since. Over the years of learning and experimenting, he has settled on a design principle that he calls simplista, a kind of minimalism with clean, flowing, seamless lines that give the wood's texture and grain the main stage. You might spot subtle influences from Japanese and Scandinavian art. For more, follow Asaf on Instagram, @asafpld, and visit his website, asafwood.com.

Sand and finish

Sand inside the cap with one finger and taut sandpaper.

The unfinished, completed mushroom.

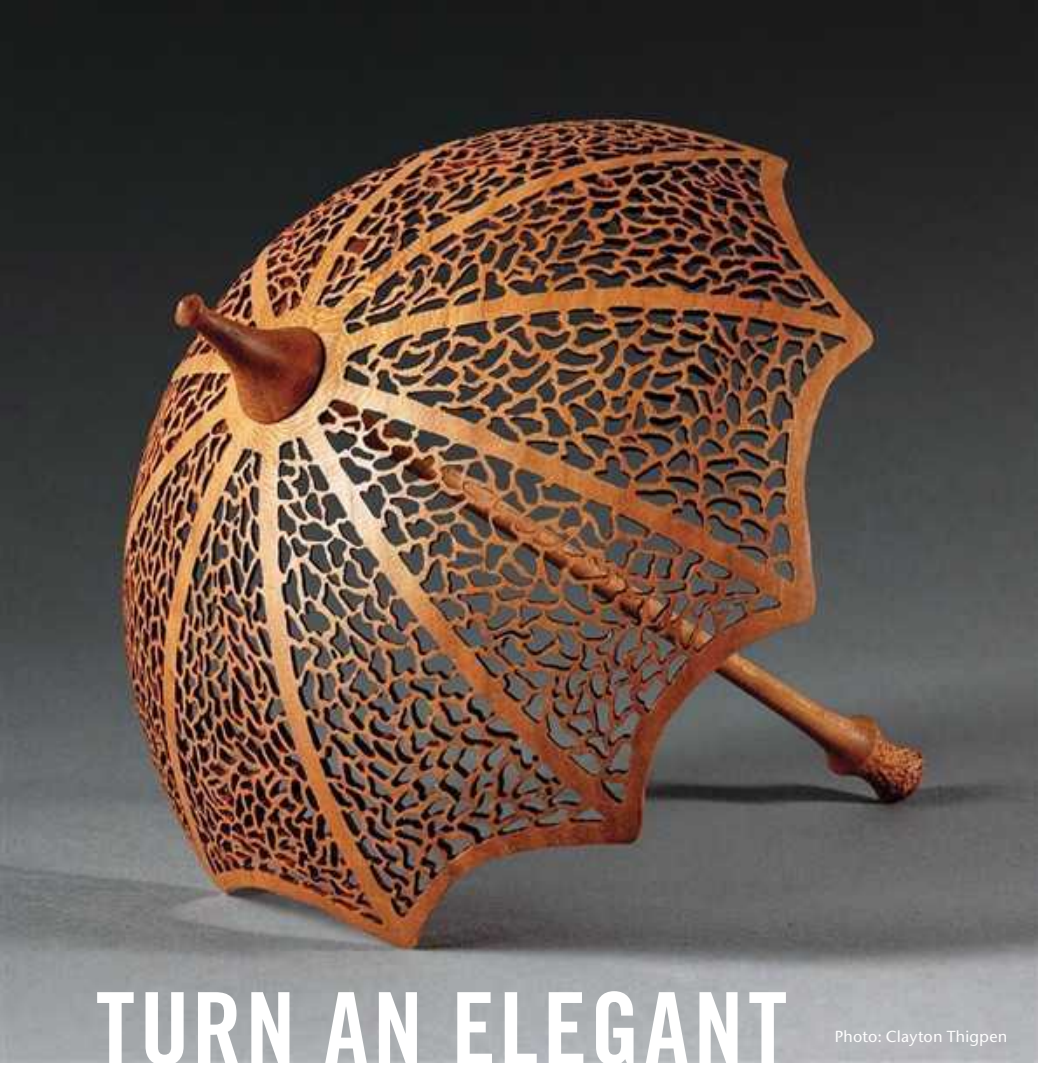


Photo: Clayton Thigpen

TURN AN ELEGANT PARASOL

Sammy Long

It seems that whenever I'm introduced as a woodworker, people immediately ask me if I can make furniture, birdhouses, etc., and if I can possibly fix a broken wooden object that they own. I respond by saying I really don't do flat work. As those of you reading this will understand, the conversation continues as I describe the many things woodturners can make. From the beginning of this joyful adventure, my wife Maureen has been my helper. She is always thinking of round things that can be made on a lathe and offers wanted (and sometimes unwanted) advice and critiques. Of course, her ideas percolate in my mind and sometimes hang around for a while until I dismiss or act on them. That was the case with the parasol shown in this article. Maureen suggested it years ago and then reminded me of the idea periodically over the years, never letting go until I said I would give it a try.

Maureen said that a turned parasol should be a delicate, breakable thing, so I had to consider the weight of the canopy and how I would attach a handle and a finial to the top. I knew that the canopy would have to be turned thin to achieve a delicate appearance. From the beginning, I planned to pierce the canopy using what I had learned from one of my inspirations, Binh Pho. So, I gave it a shot. The first one was pretty but so fragile that it didn't make it out of the shop. "Someone" stuck his or her thumb right through it! After that experience, I decided the parasol canopy would need some ribs for support, as I will describe later. The next challenge was getting the shaft and handle the right length and size to be in proportion and aesthetically pleasing. It took some time and included helpful critiques from Maureen.

To make the process description easier to understand, I'll use the following terms throughout this article. The *canopy* is the top covering of the parasol that provides shade. The *shaft* goes through the canopy and attaches to the finial on top. The *handle* is a turned feature at the base of the shaft.

Turn outside of canopy

For the canopy, I used a green (unseasoned, or wet) bowl blank. Tight grain woods work best for thin-turning and piercing. A good sized blank to start with would be approximately 3" (8cm) thick and 6" (15cm) in diameter. I rough-turned the blank with it mounted between centers and formed a tenon at the tailstock end (*Photo 1*). I then turned the workpiece around, held the tenon in my chuck, and re-trued the outside (*Photo 2*). Next, I removed all toolmarks on the outside surface by scraping or using a bowl gouge to shear-scrape. I then wet-sanded to 320-grit abrasive.

Turn inside of canopy

To turn the inside of the bowl, I made several cuts using a bowl gouge, advancing the tool from the rim to the bottom of the bowl (*Photo 3*). To start, I brought the wall thickness to about ¾" (19mm), which is the same process I use when roughing out a bowl for drying and twice-turning.

Once I had achieved a consistent wall thickness, it was time to start thinning the bowl walls. I placed a light at the back side of the bowl and used the

translucence of the wood to judge the thickness as I cut. For now, I only made cuts 1" to 1½" (25mm to 38mm) down from the rim, as shown in *Photo 4*. I wanted to keep the mass in the bowl to reduce vibrations. When I suspected the bowl walls were thin enough, I measured with a caliper to make sure. My goal was 3/32" (2.5mm) or a little less. Interestingly, going too thin will not work well for piercing: too-thin walls will weaken the canopy, while a thickness of more than 3/32" will overwork your piercing tool and take much more time.

I made sure the wall thickness was the same from the rim to the bottom, using shades of translucence to help judge the thickness. I sanded through the grits as I completed each section, stopping at 320 grit (*Photo 5*). You can go back to do any touch-up sanding later. When I reached the end with the tenon, I continued the same curve and flow, as I was not able to use the light or caliper to help me gauge thickness. I then sanded the entire bowl and drilled a 3/16" (5mm) hole through the bottom and into the tenon (*Photo 6*).

Remove the tenon

I used a jam chuck with a flashlight shining through the middle to reverse-mount the bowl and remove the tenon. With the light on, I could gauge the thickness of the bottom as I turned away the tenon (*Photo 7*). The bowl was held on the jam chuck with tailstock pressure, so I had to take light cuts to remove the tenon. As I got closer to having it removed, I barely allowed the bevel of my bowl gouge to "kiss" the finished areas of the bowl (*Photo 8*). The tool made contact and cut the high areas. I continued with these careful cuts, following the contour of the bowl at what would become the top of the parasol's canopy, using the light in the jam chuck to help judge thickness. Once I turned down to only a nub in the live center, I used my spindle gouge to cut it even smaller. Then I used a vortex tool to make small V-cuts until I had cleaned the bottom completely.

Establish layout of canopy

The next step was to determine the piercing pattern and the number of ribs from top to bottom on the outside of the canopy. The ribs provide needed support and help prevent breakage. I placed the bowl on a jam chuck with the point of the cone center in the 3/16" hole I had drilled. I then mounted my flat tool-rest in the banjo to hold my pencil flat and steady. The pencil should be at the height of the tailstock's center point. I used an indexing wheel to equally space the ribs of the canopy (*Photo 9*).

Next, to add scallops at the bottom of the canopy, I drew a guideline around the rim of the bowl at the height I wanted the top of the scallops to be. On the top of the canopy, I drew another ring to use as the boundary for the piercing. Once these lines were drawn, I used painter's tape strips to cover each rib line. I then drew the curves of the ▸

Rough-turn bowl/canopy

With the work mounted between centers, rough-shape the outside of the canopy and form a chucking tenon at the tailstock end.

Remount the work in a chuck and refine and sand the outside profile.

Hollow and sand interior

(3) Using a bowl gouge, the author hollows the canopy to a wall thickness of about ¾".

(4-5) Further thinning of the canopy wall is done incrementally to maintain supportive wood as you go. Turn a section thin and sand it before progressing to the next section. A bright light behind the work reveals the translucency of the wood and indicates thickness.

Drill through bottom

A 3⁄16" bit mounted in a drill chuck accurately handles the task of boring through the canopy top and into the chucking tenon.

Reverse-mount, remove tenon

With the work reverse-mounted on a jam chuck, the author turns away the chucking tenon. Not shown, a light shines through the jam chuck, revealing the wood's translucency at the top.

scallops using the taped ribs as boundaries and the line drawn earlier for the height of the scallops (*Photo 10*). For the last step, I used a piercing bit to follow my hand-drawn lines and remove the wood to form the scallops (*Photo 11*).

Pierce the canopy

I use the Presto II pneumatic piercing tool. The correct air pressure is 28-32 psi, which produces 320,000 rpm. I pierced the wood between the ribs using a dental bur (*Photos 12, 13*).

At this point, you know if you have done a good job of turning to the correct thickness. If the wood is too thin, the bur will skate, or run, and if it is too thick, the bur will burn more than pierce. I pierced each hole going clockwise and then counterclockwise to remove any charred edges, keeping my design in mind as I pierced. I made sure that uniform spacing of the holes, following a pattern, was the same.

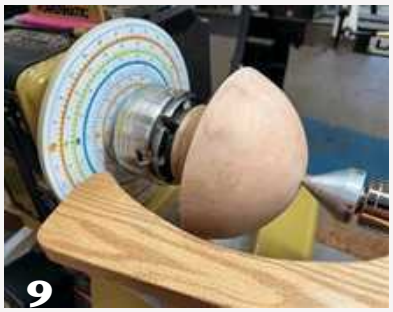
The handpiece of the piercing tool must always be perpendicular when piercing to maintain proper thickness and consistency in the pattern.

It is usually necessary to complete the piercing in more than one session, as the process requires concentration and tool control. Once the piercing was completed, I lightly sanded the wood to remove any remaining pencil marks.

Turn the shaft

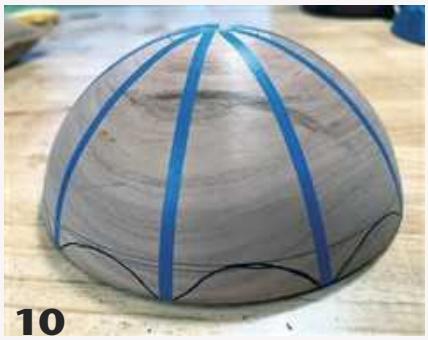
Turning the parasol's shaft is a good spindle-turning exercise. The shaft, including the handle at the end, is

Lay out ribs

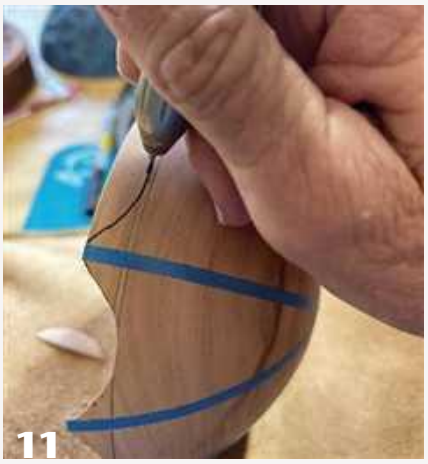


The thinly turned canopy is again mounted on a jam chuck, with a cone center in the through hole at the top. The author's indexing wheel and flat toolrest table aid in laying out the canopy's ribs.

Mark and cut scallops



The rib sections are marked and denoted with thin lengths of masking tape, and the scallops are drawn and then cut out with a piercing tool.



first turned between centers, so you can form a tenon to mount the work in a chuck. I held the tenon in the chuck and brought up the tailstock live center for support.

I turned the shaft and handle as one piece to the desired length and diameter, leaving a tenon ⅜" (9.5mm) long and 3⁄16" in diameter at the tailstock end (*Photo 14*). This 3⁄16"-diameter tenon will go through the canopy and into the finial. Finish sanding to your desired grit, and then part the shaft from the lathe (*Photo 15*).

Turn the finial

I turned the finial with the wood mounted in the chuck so I could work without the tailstock. The size and shape of the finial is up to you, but a 3⁄16" hole must be drilled in its end to accept the tenon on the end of the shaft. Sand and part off the finial (*Photos 16, 17*).

All sanding should be completed prior to assembly. I put the shaft through the canopy and attached the finial with wood glue. I finished the parasol with Danish oil after assembly was complete.

Conclusion

When I started working on this project, I kept calling the parasols umbrellas, and I was quickly corrected. You can call yours an umbrella or a parasol. You can make them thick or thin, large or small. There are so many ways to embellish them. I hope you enjoy the process and the results as much as I did! ■

Sammy Long, a resident of Brandon, Mississippi, is known for his hollow forms with leaf carvings, piercings, and spiraling. He is a member of the Craftsman's Guild of Mississippi and Magnolia Woodturners. He has taught and demonstrated at the Appalachian Center for Crafts, John C. Campbell Folk School, Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts, and for local and regional woodturning clubs and symposia as well as the AAW International Symposium. Those who have directly influenced Sammy's work have been John Jordan, Binh Pho, and Dixie Biggs.

Pierce the parasol canopy

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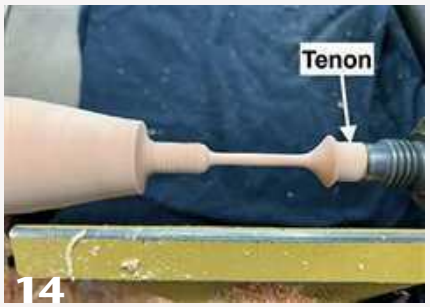
13

The areas between the ribs are pierced carefully. Not shown, the author uses a Presto II pneumatic tool outfitted with a dental bur.

Turn the shaft/handle



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15

Mount and turn wood for the parasol's shaft. A tenon at the tailstock end will extend through the top of the canopy and into a hole in the top finial.

Turn the top finial

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A 3⁄16" hole is drilled in the top finial, which is then shaped and parted off.

TURNERS AND MANUFACTURERS

Terry Martin

The equipment available to woodturners has changed over the last forty years, as lathe designs, tools, chucking systems, personal safety accessories, and more have constantly evolved. However, many of the new ideas have been driven more by the engineering ideas of manufacturers than by the needs of turners. They just didn't know what it was like to stand at a lathe and turn wood. I have used a lathe where the lathe stand on my side stuck out so far that I had to lean over it to reach the wood, and I have seen fixed on/off switches placed where it was dangerous to reach for them.

I have sometimes suggested changes to manufacturers, but few have listened. It is easy to understand the resistance because once the manufacturing process has begun, it is expensive and time-consuming to adjust all the tooling and processes that are involved. The obvious way for manufacturers to avoid this is to consult with turners *before* they begin manufacturing. I recently had the experience of working with a manufacturer who has always done this, and I am writing this story in the hope that the message will reach more makers and result in better products for us all. I also hope that other turners will contact manufacturers with any clear ideas they have for new products.

A new idea for me

In 1989 I met a retired machinist named Fritz Prass. He made some of his own tools and adapted a simple scraper to help remove the "nub" from the bottom of a bowl, so I asked him to make one for me. The tool consists of a flat shaft that is very stable on the toolrest (*Photo 1*). Although it is not evident in the photo, there is a small hole in the end for inserting a cutter and a grub screw to hold it. There is also a small hole in the end of the wooden handle that butts up against a live center in the tailstock. By holding the handle hard up against the live center, it is possible to swing the tool in a perfect arc. What impressed me most was that the tool could remove as little as a thousandth of an inch (0.02mm) on each pass by rotating the tailstock wheel only a few degrees. It gave me a level of control that is impossible to achieve freehand, and I immediately realized that I could do much more than remove the nub. All I had to do was continue cutting out to the rim of the bowl and I had a perfect arc with no ripples or tearout.

I saw the potential to expand its use, but first I needed to overcome two problems. Firstly, the tool was limited to cutting only one arc. As a possible solution, I sketched two flat bars with slots cut along their interior so that bolts and wing nuts could be used to lock the tool at various lengths. Secondly, I had to continuously hold the handle hard against the live center, which fully occupied one hand. I realized that if I could lock the tool into the quill, it would free up that captive hand, and I immediately thought of a universal joint attached to a Morse taper to fit into the quill.

Seeking help

I have no metalworking skills, so I asked Glenn Roberts, a friend with both woodturning and machining skills, if he could make the tool for me. He came up with a variation that worked better than my idea. He cut three lengths of square tubing that are joined by locking short bars into the shafts with grub screws. Glenn also welded a Morse taper to one side of a universal joint, and a short bar to the other end. The assembled tool is held firmly in the tailstock and able to swing through any arc determined by the combination of the three sections of shaft. The smallest section gives me an inside radius of 6" (15cm), and the three shafts together could shape a bowl with a 30" (76cm) inside radius (*Photos 2-4*).

I used the tool for many years, and other turners were amazed at the

Initial inspiration

1

The basic arc-cutting tool that triggered the author's new idea. In this first version, the wooden tool handle had to be manually pressed against the live center in the tailstock, relegating one hand to this task.

An early version

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4

An early iteration of the tool made use of a universal joint mounted in the tailstock quill and three segments of square stock held together with grub screws. Arc radii could be adjusted by using different combinations of the square stock.

consistent line on the interior of my bowls and platters. They always asked, "How did you do that?" and I usually said, "Carefully!" One reason I never told anyone about my system is that there are plenty of purists who are all too ready to accuse anyone who uses a system like this of cheating. But if we follow that logic, then we shouldn't, for example, use tool-sharpening jigs or laser-guided captive hollowing systems. I can sharpen a tool or hollow a vessel freehand, but why not use a jig that allows me to do it better? For me, it is the result that matters and not how it is done. For all the shallow bowls and platters I have made with this system, no *customer* has ever asked me how I did it.

Meeting Brent English

For the last few years, I have been giving online presentations on creative thinking to the Badger Woodturners in Madison, Wisconsin. This AAW chapter has many interesting members, and I have continued to chat online with several of them. Among them is Brent English, the owner of Robust Tools. We have enjoyed our chats because we are like-minded, and I was also aware of Brent's business life because I had used one of his American Beauty lathes for many weeks when I stayed with my friend Jean LeGwin in North Carolina.

I asked Brent how he had become so good at designing lathes, and he told me the story: "I've been a compulsive maker since I was a little boy. My dad was a cobbler, and I grew up in his shop where things were fixed and made. After high school, I went to vocational school to become a machinist, and I also took welding classes. I did that for ten years, but I used to envy the more qualified guys who wore clean shirts and drove expensive cars, so at 28, I went to college and got a bachelor's degree in manufacturing engineering. After that, because I had aspirations to be a vocational schoolteacher, I got a master's degree in industrial technology education and that led me into product development."

Brent rediscovers woodturning

On top of this technical background, I knew Brent was an avid woodturner. I asked him how he started woodturning, and he said, "In 1995 we lived on thirty-six acres where a big burly box-elder tree blew down in a storm. One of my co-workers was a woodturner, so I told him about it. He was a member of the local AAW chapter and several of them came to take the burls off the tree. I had turned wood in high school, so I started playing around with a burl on my metal lathe. I thought it was fun, so I bought an antique wood lathe, and I just fell for it all. I had a lot of different woods on my property—boxelder, cherry, black walnut, elm, oak, willow—so there was no shortage of wood. I started doing craft fairs and that was fun."

Why not make a wood lathe?

Brent: "Later, the same friend who got me into woodturning said, 'You know about metalworking as well as product design and development, so you should make a lathe for yourself.' I thought I would try, but I knew that a successful design process includes asking people to critique your ideas. I got feedback on what I was doing and came up with the early version of what we now call the American Beauty. The people who were advising me suggested that if I made more of these lathes, people would buy them. I knew I had the skills to do it, so I went to five AAW chapters near me and did a survey of what woodturners like and don't like about their lathes. I encouraged them to do it by offering a cherry burl to the person whose name was pulled out of a hat. I made two more lathes in my garage in my free time, then took them to the AAW Symposium in 2005. It was easy to sell them and in that first year we made seven lathes, all fabricated, but within a couple of years we switched to cast iron for the banjo, head- and tailstock, and Tilt-Away."

The more we chatted and the more I saw of Brent's products on his website, I started to think he might be interested in my arc cutter. I mentioned it to him, and he said he'd look at the idea. His words were very clear: "I will listen, but I might not act." I understood that he must get many approaches from turners who thought they had a good idea, so I sent him a series of photos and ▸

Turning the perfect arc

5

The perfect arc turned on a square platter.

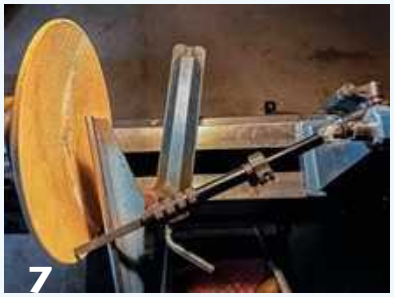
The TruArc kit

6

Photo: Brent English

The evolution of an idea: complete kit with telescoping arm and cutter-holding collet system.

A trial bowl/platter



7

A jacaranda trial piece with a glued bark inclusion, ready to put the system to the test.

wrote: "For now this does very well, but I know that with your knowledge and skills you could make something better." Brent must have wondered if I thought I would make money out of it, so I told him I was not interested in that. I just believed it was time to share the idea.

The project begins

Brent replied: "I like the idea, Terry. I'm kicking around ideas to adjust the radius over a wide range. You had segments, but we could use something that telescopes, and I might implement my collet mechanism at the end for tool-holding. Also, I see the cutting tool being on the toolrest, not the telescoping rod."

Brent sent me some images of telescoping tripod legs, and I replied, "My only reservation is that they might be a bit lightweight, but you'd be able to judge that better than me. If, as you say, the cutting tool can be the only part resting on the toolrest, then it should work. So I am thinking that the best cutting tool would be a narrow flat scraper, thick enough to resist the force from the wood."

Brent: "I think I'll buy a cheap camera tripod and sacrifice its legs to make a couple of these."

Terry: "If you produce a good prototype, would you be willing to send it for me to trial? Your scrapers should work very well. Also, I think you don't need a universal joint to fit in the quill, a flat swivel joint should work well."

Brent: "Give me a few weeks to put together a 'proof of principle' model using a tripod leg, then you can test the idea before I invest in a more elegant version."

Testing the prototype

In no time at all the prototype arrived and I started testing it on a variety of woods and sizes. I sent a series of photos and videos to Brent with variations such as flat-cutting vs. shear-cutting. I even included slow-motion videos, courtesy of my iPhone.

Brent: "Can you try an interrupted cut, maybe a square platter?"

Terry: "Today I cut a square of figured Queensland maple, bone dry and one of the hardest woods I have, 10" (25cm) square and 1¾" (4cm) thick. I roughed a slight curve on the back with a gouge and it was hard going. I decided to try a carbide cutter on the front, and it worked well. I was only taking very fine cuts at speeds no higher than 900 rpm, and there was no flexing or vibration. The final curve on the square outside edges was a perfect arc, and matching the underside to that afterwards will be easy" (*Photo 5*).

When Brent and I discussed the process of finishing the underside of a piece after the inside of the bowl is done, he told me about the reaction to this idea from an accomplished turner: "He crossed his eyes and smoke was coming out of his ears! Definitely one of those guys who says, 'That's not how you do it!'" In fact, I wrote an article for this journal outlining the merits of completing a bowl's bottom *after* the inside is done—"Bottoms Up! Bowl-Turning Steps Reconsidered" (vol 38, no 5, page 18).

I was enjoying the process, and I told Brent, "This continues to be fun. You know so much more than I do about tooling, so I am learning a lot." We communicated clearly, both making suggestions as we went, and we disagreed about nothing. Once it was clear that Brent would go ahead with the project, we talked about a name for the tool and Brent suggested TruArc, which I happily agreed to.

Testing the final product

When the finished product arrived, all packed neatly with its user manual and dimension guide, I was very impressed (*Photo 6*). I wanted to test it comprehensively, so I made several pieces of different sizes. I chose a piece of jacaranda that had a bark inclusion across it, and I thought it would make a good test piece. The weak spot with

Tool presentation

*(8-9)*The system allows for the tool to be presented flat or turned up at an angle for shear-cutting, which produces a surface typically free of tearout.

(10) The clean surface.

the bark inclusion required gluing, so this sample might prove that I could cleanly cut delicate wood using the new system.

I roughed the curve out, then added glue to the fault in the wood. Brent's chart of dimensions allowed me to quickly set the length of the arm to give the best result for that piece of wood (*Photo 7*). I moved the toolrest as close to the wood as possible to reduce overhang and adjusted the height of the toolrest so it cut at dead center. Although the wood was very dry, turning at around 1000 rpm resulted in the micro-thin shavings peeling off cleanly (*Photo 8*). When I approached the final cuts, I rotated the tool to the left and took a few shear-cut passes. The shavings curled off beautifully (*Photo 9*). If you want to cut "downhill" on supported grain, you can rotate the tool to the right and work towards the center. When I was done, the glue line was secure and the final result was exactly what I had hoped for (*Photo 10*). All I had to do was clean up the rim and turn the underside to match the curve of the top (*Photo 11*).

After years of using my own clunky system, Brent's version was easy to adjust and use. All of his experience and skill had made an awkward tool into a marketable product. Although there is a limit to how small the diameter of a bowl can be, the TruArc can help you turn beautiful shallow bowls in a wide range of sizes. It can still be used just to remove the bump in the middle of any bowl, which was the purpose of the original tool, and it can also be used to remove the bump in the bottom of a hollow vessel.

Conclusion

Brent took the new system to the 2024 AAW International Symposium in Portland, Oregon, and made enough sales to know it had been worth the time we spent developing it. He said some customers commented that the TruArc is the first brand-new idea they had seen for a long time.

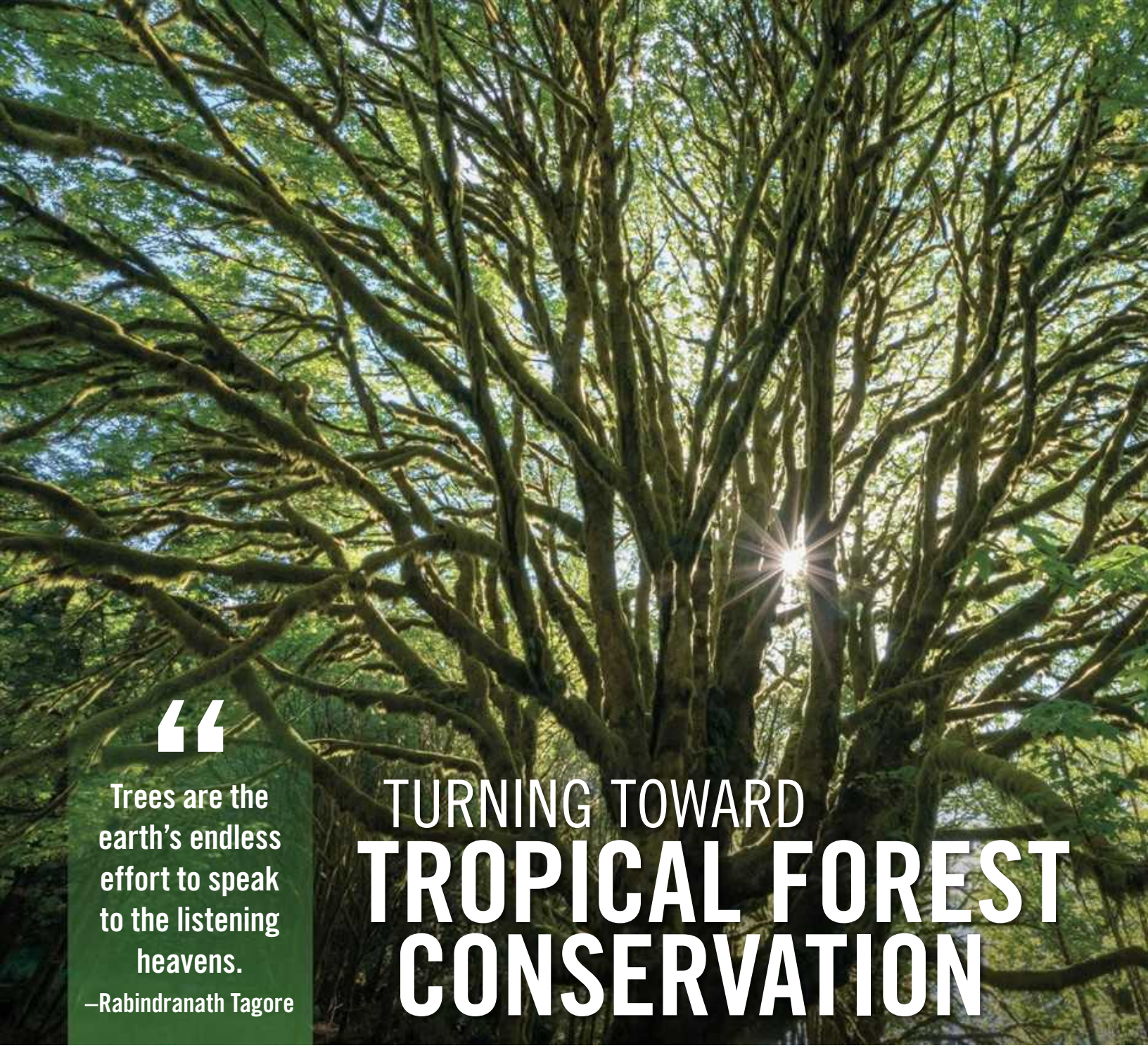
When we were done, I asked Brent why he agreed to do this project with me. He said, "I had already been admiring your work and the beautiful cuts you make, so when you showed me how you do it, it was an 'aha' moment. I thought, 'Terry's really got something.'" For myself, I knew that Brent is a very good turner and thought that his woodturning experience could only be of significant benefit. Brent and I feel that this process was a good example of how woodturners and manufacturers should cooperate. If turners have an idea that they believe is worth pursuing, they should approach a manufacturer, but remember what Brent told me: "I will listen, but I may not act. Some people solve a problem in a way that works for them, but that doesn't make it broadly applicable."

If you want to watch the TruArc in action, go to the Robust website and see Brent demonstrating it in his excellent video: turnrobust.com/product/tru-arc. ■

Terry Martin is a woodturner and writer working in Ipswich, Australia. Visit his website, terrymartinwoodartist.com, or contact him at tmartin111@bigpond.com.

The completed piece

The completed bowl, hollowed using the TruArc system. In this process, the curve of the bowl's bottom is finalized *after* hollowing.



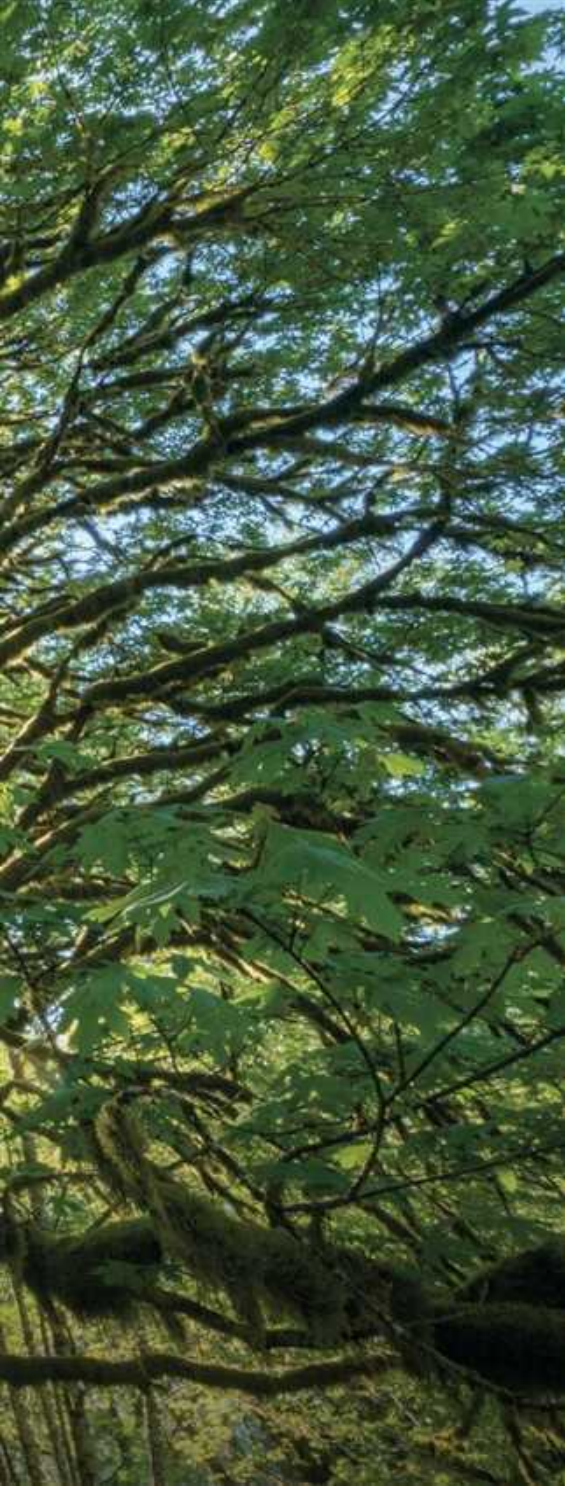
> Trees are the earth's endless effort to speak to the listening heavens.
> –Rabindranath Tagore

TURNING TOWARD TROPICAL FOREST CONSERVATION

Dr. Nalini Nadkarni

The words from Rabindranath Tagore can remind woodturners that trees are connectors, weaving threads both visible and unseen to link different worlds. Biologically, trees connect earth and sky. Their trunks transport water between the forest floor and the atmosphere, creating clouds and cooling the air of our landscapes. Water vapor condenses on the leaves of their crowns, funneling moisture to the ground, nurturing the soil. Trees connect people to the livelihoods of forestry and arboriculture. When urban dwellers seek respite from the stress of city life, trees connect us to a sense of quiet reflection and tranquility.

Woodturners are connectors, too. They provide a vital link between trees and people through the objects of art and craft they create. A woodturner selects a piece of wood from a tree and applies his or her skill, tools, and an individual aesthetic to create something beautiful and useful. The person who views it cannot help but respect and delight in its source—a tree and the forest in which it grew.



The author conducts forest canopy research in the cloud forest of Monteverde, Costa Rica.

Photo: Christian Sinibaldi

This "superpower" of woodturners has become increasingly critical because human activities are disrupting many of the vital connections that trees rely upon to flourish, especially in tropical regions. Deforestation leads to loss of habitat and biodiversity. Expanding farmland for small- and large-scale agriculture encroaches on forests and impairs ecosystem functions. New roads and dams cut off wildlife corridors and enable people to move to previously remote areas, which leads to further deforestation. People who rely on their local forests, many of whom are Indigenous, are losing the capacity to maintain their traditional livelihoods because of declines in forest health.

This litany of actions that threaten forests sometimes leads me to paralyzing despair. I have loved trees since I was a little girl, when I would climb the maples in my front yard in suburban Maryland. My own connection to trees led me to a profession that I hoped would help me protect them.

In rainforest canopies

I chose to be a scientist and have studied forest ecology for more than four decades. My scientific research focuses on the plants and animals in rainforest canopies, the biota that live high above the forest floor. Until forty years ago, this was considered "the last biotic frontier" because it was impossible to get safe access to the treetops. Since then, canopy researchers have used canopy walkways, construction cranes, mountain-climbing techniques, and, more recently, drones and satellite imagery to study the treetops. My long-term canopy sites are in the tropical forests of Costa Rica and the temperate rainforests of Washington State, USA.

My students and I have learned that forest canopies sustain a tremendous diversity of plants, mammals, birds, invertebrates, fungi, and microorganisms, many of which live their entire life cycles without ever touching the forest floor. These arboreal communities perform critical ecosystem functions, such as catching and holding water and nutrients in rainfall, which increase the nutrient capital of the whole forest. They also provide food and nesting materials for arboreal animals, some of which specialize on canopy-dwelling plants. Canopy biota are an integral part of these forests, connecting—and connected to—the trees in which they dwell.

Most of this research has taken place in what ecologists call primary forests, on lands that have been protected from deforestation and fragmentation. But human activities now encroach within and beyond these parks and reserves, harming some of the tree species cherished by woodturners. An example is pernambuco trees (*Paubrasilia echinata*), which cannot live and reproduce in "secondary" forests nor in plantations because they require the environmental conditions and specific interactions that occur only within primary forests. ▸

A mature pernambuco, or brazilwood, tree, whose distribution is now largely restricted to protected fragments of Atlantic forests.

Traditionally, scientists like me have mainly communicated their knowledge to other scientists. But the threats to forests now demand that we share our knowledge beyond the ivory tower so the public can learn from those who understand trees and forests in other ways. We must engage groups whose diverse perspectives can enhance the critical connections within forests, and between forests and people. Woodturners are a perfect example of such groups. People who craft wood as an artform can help protect forests because of their own deep connections to trees. The world can learn a lot from their efficient use of precious woods and the care they take in sourcing wood. Even more directly, in studios, art fairs, and museums, woodturners inspire and inform those who appreciate the objects they have shaped.

I am a novice woodturner. Three years ago, I started turning wood in my study site of Monteverde, Costa Rica, a mountainous checkerboard landscape of primary forests and dairy-farming pastures. My retired 87-year-old neighbor, Howard Rockwell, farmed his land for fifty-two years—mostly pasture surrounded by primary forest. During that time, Howard hauled chunks of trunks from trees that had fallen during windstorms to dry in his open-sided shed. His hand-built woodshed has a full set of woodshop tools, including an ancient lathe—a lumbering beast of a machine with one belt and a single speed. I asked permission to use his lathe, and he generously gave me the key to his shop, saying "I'm glad someone other than that lizard will use it."

I make small bowls on a more modern lathe in my garage in Salt Lake City, and on another in my studio in Costa Rica. I gain great joy from turning, cherishing the feel of the curved wood in my hands. My favorite wood is what Howard calls *cedro amargo*, or bitter cedar (*Cedrela odorata*), which is not in fact a cedar but a member of the mahogany family. Its name comes from the penetrating aroma and bitter taste of the wood. In Costa Rica, it grows in pastures, along fence lines, and in forests. It is a heavy wood with a straight grain and a luster that highlights its shape. Its wood is sought after for fine furniture, musical instruments, and crafts, not only for its beautiful appearance but for its natural resistance to insect attack.

International regulations

Because *Cedrela odorata* grows well outside of primary forests, it has not required protective legal status, but the export of other tropical woods is subject to international regulations. One type of oversight comes from the

We must engage groups whose diverse perspectives can enhance the critical connections within forests, and between forests and people. Woodturners are a perfect example of such groups.

International Union of Conservation (IUCN) which established the "IUCN Red List of Threatened Species" in 1964, the world's most comprehensive information source on the global extinction risk status of animal, plant, and fungal species, including tropical trees. It helps inform conservation decisions by providing information about the population size, habitat, and ecology of a species, as well as its trade status and actions to counteract the threats it faces. The IUCN has no actionable powers, but the list is used by government agencies, wildlife departments, conservation-related non-governmental organizations, educational organizations, and the business community.

A second body of oversight is the Convention on International Trade Endangered Species (CITES), formed in 1975 in response to the burgeoning trade in international wildlife. It lists live animals, plants, and the vast array of products derived from them, including food, exotic leather goods, musical instruments, timber, and medicines. Exploitation of some animal and plant species is high, and their trade, together with habitat loss, depletes their populations. This can lead to extinction. With signatories from 183 nations, CITES provides three levels of protection to ensure that international trade in over 40,000 species of wild animals and plants is legal, traceable, and sustainable.

I note that many traded species—including tropical trees such as *cedro amargo*—are not endangered. Sustainably harvested materials that support the livelihoods of forest dwellers can help conserve forests and support their local human populations. But the existence of agreements such as CITES, grounded in scientifically sound information curated by the IUCN, is an important safeguard for resources that are currently threatened.

Turning my first bowls connected me to trees in a different way than all my years of forest research. Instead of measuring the diameter of the trunks or grinding up leaves to determine their nitrogen content, I could feel the wood and learn its grain with my hands. After a few months of woodturning in Howard's woodshop, I began attending meetings of the Utah Woodturners Association in Salt Lake City, a wonderful group of turners who were generous with their expertise and guidance. I then joined the American Association of Woodturners (AAW), which led me to the AAW Symposium in Portland, Oregon, in 2024. There, I gave the keynote presentation on the connections between turning and conservation.

Many woodturners I met are already mindful of conservation. In my conversations, I learned that woodturners understand that greater awareness and actions are needed to ensure that tropical wood will be available in the future. They proudly described to me the measures they take to conserve trees: reusing scrap wood, forging relationships with city arborists to reclaim downed urban trees that would otherwise end up in landfills, and ensuring the wood they purchase has verified provenance and permits. Such individual and organizational efforts contribute substantially to our collective power to turn toward conservation.

Seeking collaborators

We are seeking collaborators and pathways to directly connect woodturning to forest conservation in equatorial landscapes. In searching the broad array of conservation groups that protect tropical trees, I identified one that embodies a philosophy of connection and sustainability: The Regenerative Agroforestry Impact Network (RAIN). Its mission is to empower Indigenous and traditional communities to restore degraded land in Brazil. The Network facilitates direct partnerships for change between those who face the impacts of ecosystem disruption and people who want to support them. The group states: "RAIN is a mutual aid organization inspired by the efficiency and harmony found in nature's interconnected systems... Just like the web of fungal threads that allows trees to trade resources and information, we are building a network of communication, support and resilience...."

My early conversations with their leaders, Danny Diskin, James Tiburcio, and Bianca Cardozo Flores, informed me of their innovative programs to protect existing primary forests and forest fragments, to restore degraded landscapes with scientifically sound methodologies, and to involve local ▸

Howard Rockwell's woodshop in Monteverde, Costa Rica, houses an old lathe that the author was allowed to use.

communities in sustaining livelihoods and the environment. The RAIN group gives me a feeling of hope, counteracting the despair triggered by stories of deforestation and climate change. Along with their partners in *quilombos* (villages of formerly enslaved people), they have planted 100,000 mangroves in the mouth of the Amazon.

RAIN is currently engaging with Indigenous groups whose fragmented traditional lands harbor some of the last remaining stocks of pernambuco trees in the world. This tree, also called brazilwood or *pau brasil*, was originally used by Indigenous groups in Brazil and later exploited by early Portuguese explorers for a red dye that made it a valuable trading commodity. It has great durability, good workability, and high density (Janka hardness of 2,820 lbf)). With straight grain, a fine, even texture, natural luster, and deep reddish heartwood, it is prized by woodworkers, woodturners, and musicians as the premier wood for violin and cello bows. This wood species is listed in Appendix II of CITES and is on the IUCN Red List, as its population has been reduced by over 50% in the past three generations, caused by a decline in its natural range.

Turning my first bowls connected me to trees in a different way than all my years of forest research.

It will take time and care for traditional communities to design and implement projects that can help protect and grow trees in existing forest fragments for ecological restoration. Working between vastly different cultures can be tricky. But the task is essential, and participation is open to individuals, organizations, and businesses that want to help.

Members of the USA-based AAW chapters are already involved. Tom Wirsing, who served two terms as president of the AAW and two terms as president of the Front Range Woodturners in Denver, Colorado, provides frequent demonstrations nationally and internationally. His statement articulates the need for—and complexity of—conservation:

When I first began turning wood, I wanted to experiment with exotic woods, but I soon became aware that doing so threatens the world's forests. At the same time, I realized there is an abundance of wood which is both beautiful and environmentally consciously harvested. Now conservation is foremost in every piece of wood I select.

Strengthening connections

Another AAW Symposium participant was Marianne Patton, a fifteen-year AAW member and former board member of the Inland Northwest Woodturners club in Spokane, Washington. She and others at the Symposium generated a forest of ideas to strengthen connections between woodturners and the forest conservation community. These ideas fit into distinct groups that build on the existing activities and approaches of AAW members.

One arena for action is the communication pathways and gatherings of woodturners. The AAW journal has already published articles about the plight of tropical forests and aspects of their relationship to turning wood. This journal and others can continue to raise awareness amongst the readership regarding both problems *and* solutions. Regional symposia and the AAW International Symposium could include a forest knowledge/sustainability booth, supplementing the array of resources, tools, and expertise that are always on display at these informative and inspiring meetings.

One of RAIN's partners in Brazil tends to brazilwood saplings at their nursery in Espírito Santo.

A second source is the existing structure of AAW committees. Sally Burnett is the chair of the Turners Without Borders committee, which has been active since 2012 and which promotes and facilitates outreach turning projects around the world. More recently, the committee has fostered conversations with the worldwide woodturning community to share knowledge and support. Sally stated that enhancing the presence of the AAW in the world of tropical conservation could encourage engagement from the international community of woodturners and empower them to become involved. This might also attract more members to the AAW, especially those from our international community of woodturners.

Another arena is the myriad woodturning clubs and associations in the USA and abroad. Marianne's club, for example, publishes articles in its local and regional newsletters. Individuals in these groups who become active in conservation and restoration efforts could bring updates and links to the editors of these bulletins and undertake other actions. For example, a club member could request that his/her local library provide display space about woodturning and its connection with forest conservation, perhaps offering a display of the work of local members to draw attention to the joy of turning and its presence in that community. Some turning associations foster youth outreach in schools, and an associated tropical conservation group, like RAIN, could provide those students with trusted contacts in comparable groups in other countries. Many clubs hold fundraisers for causes such as youth education or cancer care. Such an initiative could be aimed at supporting work to expand forest cover by bringing health and biodiversity back to land that RAIN has identified as being deforested or degraded.

Finally, actions can be generated and supported by forest conservation groups themselves. Organizations such as RAIN have offered to facilitate organized tours or work parties to places where AAW members will experience the thrill of walking on paths through primary forests and seeing the wild trees that create the wood we turn. In the future, those relationships could lead to longer-term solutions, such as training local woodturners and thereby creating livelihoods for people where opportunities for education, health, and nutrition necessities are scarce.

Brazilwood saplings being transported from RAIN's nursery to their future homes on Indigenous lands in Brazil.

Cross-section of wood of the pernambuco tree, cherished by turners for its rich colors, durability, and workability but now on the IUCN Red List.

More possibilities will continue to emerge in our gatherings. From my own perspectives—as both a scientist and a woodturner—such ideas and others that woodturners and conservationists collectively imagine, will lend resilience to tropical forests and bring sustainability to the woods they provide.

When I climb a tall tropical tree to carry out my studies, and when I put the finishing touches on a small bowl of *cedro amargo* carved from wood that my friend Howard collected decades ago, I feel a direct connection to trees. They provide us with the air we breathe, the beauty we cherish, and the wood we turn. If we feel that connection, our actions as woodturners can be brought to bear on the problems that trees and forests are facing. Creative and sustaining actions are beneficial to both human and arboreal worlds. ■

Dr. Nalini Nadkarni, Professor of Biology at the University of Utah, serves as a National Geographic Society Explorer at Large. For four decades, she has carried out research on the plants that live in rainforest canopies. She also engages the public in forest conservation, including woodturners, faith-based groups, artists, and people who are incarcerated. Dr. Nadkarni delivered the keynote speech at the 2024 AAW International Symposium in Portland, Oregon. For more, visit nalininadkarni.com, our-trees.com, and rainreforest.org.

The author poses at the lathe.

Second Wind at the Lathe

After a Dire Diagnosis

David Fry

Photos by Mark Finkenstaedt, except where noted.

Peering down thin vessel walls spinning on the lathe, I feel familiar hesitation. My gouge shaft clangs on the toolrest from a trembling right hand, knees threaten to buckle, and the crease fouling the smooth slope to the bottom pops in and out of view through aging eyes. Just ahead lie tricky finishing cuts far off the toolrest. My scheduled medication is ninety minutes away, but I want to end the suspense quickly. Must I forever proceed at a glacial pace? Welcome to Parkinson's at 78.

After my diagnosis in 2019, I continued to turn for two years while investigating appropriate living options for myself, a widower facing progressive loss of function. Then I reluctantly left behind my house and shop, tools, wood, bowls in progress, and LLC and moved to Collington Kendal, a lifecare community in Bowie, Maryland, near Washington, D.C. Although Collington has a woodshop, the layout and equipment are not suitable for my kind of messy woodworking. It seemed clear that my forty-year woodturning career was over.

Never say never

Days in my unfamiliar apartment passed slowly, weighed down by fatigue, pain, and boredom. I lacked the energy to take advantage of countless community activities like art classes and book groups. Nothing remotely motivated me the way woodturning had. Meanwhile, I would look at my two-dozen remaining bowls and wonder about their ultimate fate—perhaps someone's closet or rummage sale?

One day a visiting neighbor noticed my displayed work and asked whether she could photograph a few pieces for Collington's art magazine. Afterward, I began talking to others on campus about craft. It dawned on me that numerous residents here might take an interest in my bowls and even provide new homes for them—in their own or relatives'. Wouldn't it almost be worth it to give away all but my favorites to those who would appreciate them and might still be around after I'm gone? Of course, handing out free turnings would lower their perceived value and result in a lost opportunity for the community itself.

A few adventurous neighbors and I soon hatched a plan to stage *From Bole to Bowl*, an exhibition of my vessels at discounted prices. All proceeds would go to the Collington Foundation, which provides scholarships to employees and housing subsidies for needy residents. With the blessing of management, we formed a steering committee and set off on a four-month prelaunch. Meanwhile, I would need to change my mindset and somehow get back to the lathe to produce enough work for a retrospective show.

New workspace

None of this could have happened without the generosity of wood sculptor Lynda Smith-Bugge, who offered

Eastern Red Cedar Box, 2022, Lacquered wood, 6½" × 6" (17cm × 15cm)

Live-Edge Sycamore Pot, 2022, Lacquered wood, 5" × 7" (13cm × 18cm)

Wormy Maple Burl Bowl, 2023, Lacquered wood, 4½" × 5" (11cm × 13cm)

Despite the tremor and weakness, I could still complete thin open and hollow forms freehand.

me her fully equipped woodshop for weekend use. The only downside was the 100-plus miles between our homes. Every week we commuted between her home in Winchester, Virginia, and the D.C. area, where she coordinated an inner-city Mobile Woodshop program.

Returning to the lathe proved easier than expected. Despite the tremor and weakness, I could still complete thin open and hollow forms freehand. Whenever I blew through a vessel wall, it was almost always because of carelessness, like neglecting calipers, rather than tool catches from shaky hands. To this day, it's a mystery how someone who can't button his shirt, pick up a small screw from a full box, or shake a can of lacquer steadily is able to make fragile objects for sale.

Ramping up

Starting out with about fifteen pieces I was willing to let go, I told the planning committee to expect thirty to forty total by opening day. As time passed, however, sixty seemed more likely. Meanwhile, the committee and I decided to go full throttle on preparations, including professional photography and graphic design for invitations and large foamcore posters, ▸

catering, donations of wine, articles in two Collington publications, credit card and sales tax setups, and the reservation of two inhouse meeting halls. We all came up with street addresses for mailing postcards to off-campus friends, board members, and county officials.

Opening reception

Lines formed and sales took off when the doors opened. Within four hours, more than fifty pieces sold, with a handful more purchased the following week. Prices ran from $35 to $750. Few sales exceeded $500. Receipts totaled $13,000.

Live-Edge Maple Burl Pot, 2023, 5" × 5" (13cm × 13cm)

North Indian Rosewood Bottle, 2024, Lacquered wood, 4" × 5" (10cm × 13cm)

The reception for David Fry's *Eighty New Vessels* exhibition, which netted $14,000 for the Collington Foundation.

Photo: Nereide Ellis

Two-and-a-half years later, a second Collington show, *Eighty New Vessels* (plus ten older ones found in storage) netted $14,000. Eighty-two pieces sold during and shortly after the reception.

Looking back

I have no illusions about the unlikely outcomes of my shows. If they had occurred at a commercial gallery, surely only a tiny fraction of the work would have sold. The real story here is how the community fully embraced the idea of a benefit show. Over time, some thirty people—from CEO to new residents—volunteered to handle publicity, credit card purchases, signage, refreshments, bagging, closing auction, and crowd control. As people became invested in the preparations, they started thinking about purchasing pieces themselves. And so they did. ■

The woodturning career of David Fry spans forty-five years. It all began with a futile attempt to make keyless woodwinds like recorders. He soon switched to one-off saleable bowls and more profitable architectural turnings. After five years, he left production work to concentrate on simple, unembellished vessels and never looked back. Unlike many of his contemporaries in the field, he never moved on to self-expression (what he calls art) and virtuosic engineering. It has been enough to develop as an artisan interested in making traditional, gallery-quality work.

The Renwick Gallery and Hudson River Museum craft shops have exhibited and sold David's thin wood vessels, as have two-dozen galleries nationwide. Clients have included Washington National Cathedral and Harvard's Center for Hellenic Studies. He has taught scores of D.C.-area students and published more than thirty articles in American Woodturner, Fine Woodworking, *and* Crafts Report.

The Challenge of Self-Criticism

J. Paul Fennell

The distinguished contemporary writer Joyce Carol Oates said, "Self-criticism is an art not many are qualified to practice." Although she is speaking of the literary field, her remarks bear relevance for the arts and crafts fields, as well. In *The Faith of a Writer*, wherein Oates devotes an entire chapter to this subject, she continues, "Self-criticism, like self-administered brain surgery, is perhaps not a good idea." Levity aside, there is truth in Oates' comments. How do we effectively engage in self-criticism? And, importantly, can we handle it?

Oates questions whether we can look at our own work with any objectivity. And if we are able to do so at one point in time, we may also be tempted to look upon an entire lifetime of creative endeavors—sometimes with grave doubts. She cites various famous literary geniuses being severely affected, paralyzed, obsessed with self-doubt, and with the emotional "prison" of success—whereby each so-called masterpiece must be superseded by another masterpiece. There are also misconceptions by artists of how their work is perceived by others, as opposed to how they themselves feel about their own endeavors.

Oates explains, "For some writers, the natural doubts of the self are amplified by critics' negative assessments: if you want confirmation of your essential worthlessness, you can always find it, somewhere." Nonetheless, perhaps we can look at the *idea* of self-criticism and attempt to ascertain if there is anything positive in it with respect to the growth of the artist—without resorting to self-administered brain surgery.

Degrees of objectivity

Oates' point is valid: self-criticism must have a ring of objectivity with which we can see, with clarity, limitations in our own work. This can be difficult to do, and more often than not, we don't even take the time to question our personal decisions in the process of making, much less seek new answers. We are too busy, drawn deeply into executing the tasks of the moment rather than critically looking at a piece as we are making it. Or we might be in love with the idea of a piece, which then, as the late Wendell Castle asserted, "...disqualifies us in judging its beauty or value."

Only after time, emotion, and space have separated us from the work can we look at it critically, with fresh eyes. At that point, our limitations are sometimes clearly and painfully evident: "Whatever was I thinking?" On the other hand, if we are incapable of self-objectivity, this can lead to a false sense of confidence or avoidance of risk-taking and failures in favor of safely following well-established paths. But being too self-critical can be mentally or emotionally paralyzing, destroying the confidence necessary to embrace risk-taking, failure, and less-than-perfect work—essential elements in the journey toward personal growth. It's a difficult path in any direction.

Criticism from others

Criticism from others is something most artists are exposed to, usually involuntarily, when their work is publicly exhibited. If positive, the effectiveness of this criticism toward one's personal growth is, I believe, subjective at best. I suppose it looks good on a resume, and the positive stroking certainly does not hurt the ego. If the feedback is negative, however, it can cause much self-doubt if the artist is sensitive to such remarks. In the extreme, it can lead to artistic paralysis, whereby the artist may abandon making art altogether, or it can lead to the artist asking serious questions about the aesthetics of their work, based heavily upon the critic's remarks.

These potential outcomes bring up the question: Why wait for a critical review from someone else? Why not take an honest look at our own work? Just how to go about this, however, is another story in and of itself!

J. Paul Fennell, actively turning for over fifty years and an early member of the AAW, lives in Scottsdale, Arizona. His work resides in many museums and private collections, and he is a frequent demonstrator and instructor nationally and internationally. He can be contacted at jpaulfennell@yahoo.com.

REBECCA DEGROOT'S CREEPY CRAWLERS

D Wood

Regular readers of *American Woodturner* will recall that a profile of Barbara Dill appeared in the December 2022 issue (vol 37, no 6). The article, about Barbara's multiaxis turning, was divided into sections based on one of her favorite musical compositions, Saint-Saëns' *The Carnival of the Animals*. In the October 2021 issue (vol 36, no 5), featuring Ena Dubnoff, images of Ena's neckpieces and bracelets were evidence of the range of products that the head, heart, and hands of a woodturner can produce on the lathe.

Staying with the creative contributions that women are making to the field of woodturning, this issue's featured artist also has a penchant for animals and a portfolio of jewelry. Saint-Saëns paid tribute to orthodox animals like the lion, elephant, kangaroo, and swan, and, to some degree, Rebecca DeGroot engages with run-of-the-mill fauna: penguins, turkeys, and rabbits. But her preference is for sort-of animals like a spider on growth hormones, a scorpion with Art Nouveau tail, and a porcupine suffering from spine loss. These critters are part of an animated range of turned objects that are uniquely DeGroot.

The jewelry is unique, too. Picture a scuffed skateboard on which a smelly pair of sneakers performs an ollie. The trick is unsuccessful, the board smashes, and the bits are scattered around a concrete skate park (no humans were harmed during this scenario). Rebecca gathers the pieces—and whole discarded boards—laminates the colorful layers, and combines them with resin. *Voilà!* Recycled waste transformed into pendants and ear-drops sans dents and odor.

Rebecca has purple or pink (or blue or green) hair, eye shadow to match, black or sparkly blue nail polish, and a ready laugh. She's having fun. She may be judged to be as odd as her creatures, but she is a consummate woodworker. Let's explore her menagerie and expertise.

Media personality

One way to get to know Rebecca is to watch one of her instruction videos on YouTube. I recommend "Thanksgiving Turkey Turning!!!" which can be found at **tiny.cc/TurkeyTurning** (case-sensitive). The exclamation marks are a warning that the presentation will have emotional content: be prepared for levity. Yet the meat of the video is a logical show-and-tell turning and assembly demo for a small turkey-like object with three components: a body, a tail, and a beak. The outcome, a couple of

SYMPOSIUM DEMONSTRATOR IN SAINT PAUL!

Pro turner Rebecca DeGroot will be a demonstrator at AAW's International Woodturning Symposium in Saint Paul, Minnesota, June 12-15, 2025, where she will share her insights on a variety of topics. Don't miss this chance to learn from Rebecca, live and in person! For the latest details, visit aawsymposium.org.

DeGroot-made fowls in complementary woods, toddle through autumn leaves with her Thanksgiving best wishes. Only Rebecca's hands appear on camera, but her personality shines through. The video has elicited more than fifty viewer responses, including:

- "Those are awesome!! Will def[initely] be making some of these."
- "Your enthusiasm is infectious."
- "FUN...sent this to my daughter as I'm encouraging her to try turning."

Clearly the audience learned something in an enjoyable way.

Rebecca has a setup in her studio whereby a camera tripod is fixed, upside down, to the ceiling over one of her lathes. (Visit **tiny.cc/DeGrootTour** (case-sensitive) for a tour of Rebecca's woodworking shop.) A digital camera or smart phone is attached to the tripod, enabling moving images that don't interfere with equipment or operator and don't wobble. Extensive lighting, installed to facilitate turning, serves also to ensure that observers have a good view of Rebecca's actions and tools. The real-time video is edited—some scenes are sped up; audio in the form of commentary or music is added—and the result is an entertaining media post.

However, the videos wouldn't be quite as productive, or inspiring, were it not for Rebecca's skill as a teacher. She was home-schooled until seventh grade, and her transition to brick-and-mortar education was eased by an early encounter in the art classroom. She notes, "I got to meet the art teacher and get to know her and I was so excited to join her class. And I remember walking in there and feeling comfortable in my environment for the first time after being home-schooled." Rebecca took painting, sculpture, ceramics, and photography at various stages, to a remarkable degree, throughout her education. "I ended up doing so many art classes in high school that I was the teacher's assistant because they wouldn't let me continuously take more and more advanced classes. They just kept putting me in the same level over and over while the teacher said, 'You can teach this group of people while I do something else.'"

It could be that watching her mother, Robin, as a home-school teacher influenced Rebecca's decision to major in art education. After high school, she went to Kendall College of Art and Design of Ferris State University in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Before she even graduated in 2014, she was hired to teach art classes in Houston, Texas. Her curriculum included Art 1, sculpture, ceramics, jewelry, and 3D studio art. She confesses that she took small items to sand while overseeing her students' projects, but the teaching skill was evident in the awards won by her students in state-wide competitions. Rebecca ceased teaching in 2023 after nine years. ▸

Strain, 2016, Ebonized walnut, 6½" × 9" × 8½" (17cm × 23cm × 22cm)

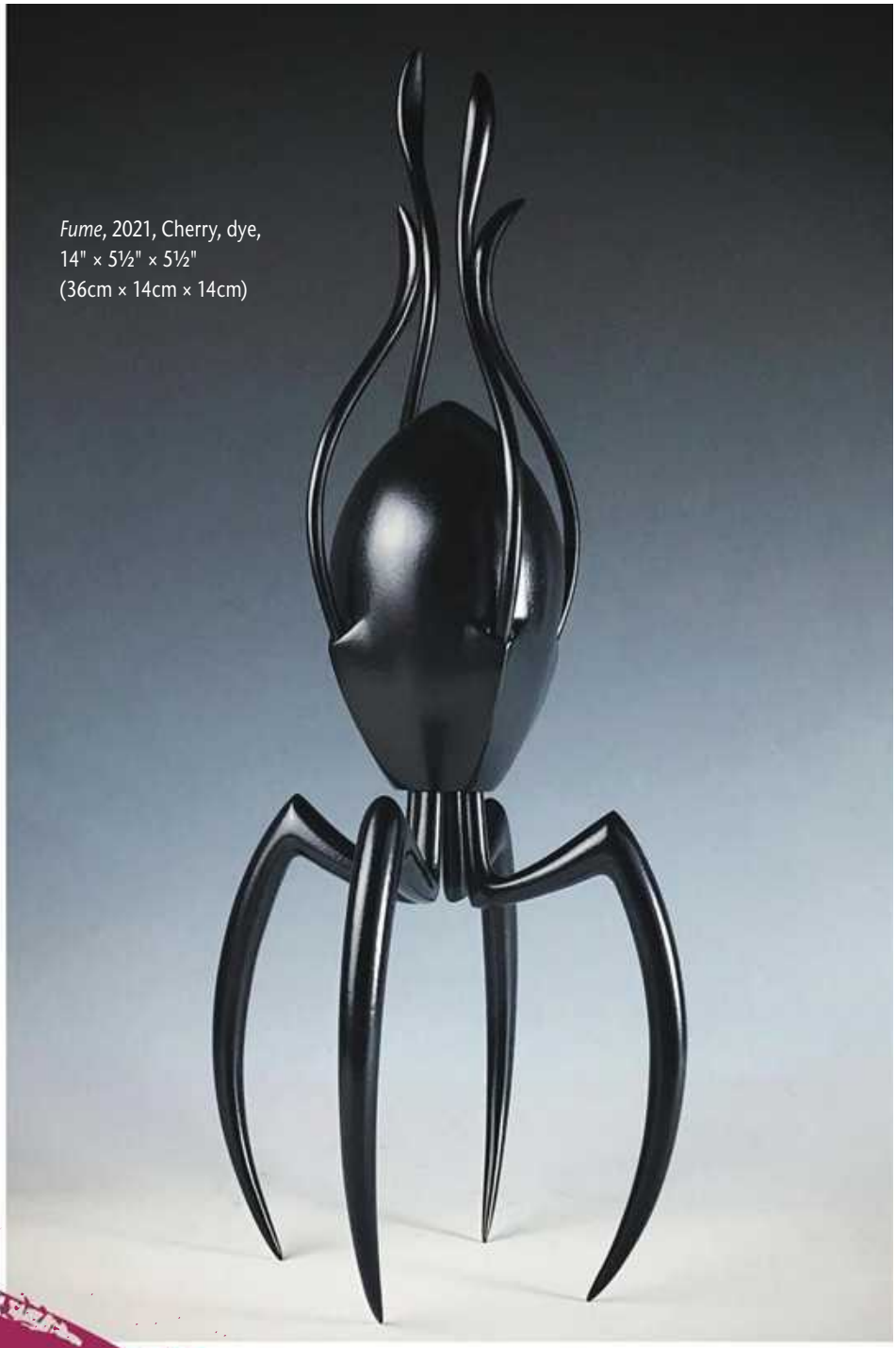
Sentry, 2021, Cherry, maple, resin mixed with pigment and powders, black dye, 11½" × 6" × 6" (29cm × 15cm × 15cm)

You'll notice that woodturning was not part of that curriculum. Rebecca was allowed to bring a lathe to school and demonstrate, but students were forbidden to touch it. This prohibition is indicative of North American society's current refusal to allow kids to test their own limits and a litigious climate that affixes blame in the event of an accident; it is also the antithesis of Rebecca DeGroot's own introduction to the lathe.

Family background

Rebecca's father, Doug, is a woodturner. One of the family legends that occurred prior to his daughter's birth concerns his hobby: "My Dad acquired cedar fenceposts and turned them into candlesticks. He sold them for a dollar per inch in height at craft fairs and every single weekend he unloaded all he'd made. The property I grew up on was purchased in part from the sales of those cedar fencepost candlesticks."

It was inevitable that while Rebecca was growing up, the DeGroot property



Fume, 2021, Cherry, dye, 14" × 5½" × 5½" (36cm × 14cm × 14cm)

Pirouette, 2024, Maple, metal chain and pins, acrylic paint, 6" × 6" × 6" (15cm × 15cm × 15cm)

Ignite, 2016, Maple, ebonized walnut, dye, 8" × 3" × 3" (20cm × 8cm × 8cm)

Refuge, 2012, Mahogany, walnut, 14" × 21" × 21" (36cm × 53cm × 53cm)

had a shed with a lathe. Doug taught Rebecca and her three brothers to turn honey dippers and other spindle pieces when he came home from work or after the family had dinner. He introduced his children to woodturning at a young age. His rule was if they could stand on a bucket and reach the lathe, he would teach them to turn. A five-gallon bucket raised Rebecca high enough off the ground as a five-year-old to address the equipment and become familiar with the tools. Was she afraid of the machine or the sharp edges? Rebecca thinks back: "I don't think so. I think I knew I had the support system I needed to be successful or, at the very least, to try. I remember continually wanting to go back out there and try again."

Meanwhile, Rebecca's mother was also a maker, specifically painting, drawing, and silk painting. She painted silk scarves and while her daughter wasn't attracted to textiles as a medium, the vivid tones of fabric dye may explain her affinity with color. The early start at the lathe did not make Rebecca a woodturning wunderkind, however. The practice disappeared from her life for about fifteen years and was revived, by chance, at Kendall. Rebecca tells the story: "As an art education major, you had to take the basics of drawing and painting and sculpture and ceramics and everything. During my second year, we were taking introduction to painting and had to learn how to make stretchers. The teacher explained what they were and then he said, 'Let's walk down to the woodshop.'" She continues, "I had no idea we had a woodshop. When we got to the basement, there was a full, complete woodshop, with tools and machines and the smell of wood and I'm like, 'How did I not know this was here?' So when we were making the stretchers, it felt like second nature being in that space again. And by the time I was done making the stretchers, I was ready to talk to a counselor about how I could add more classes so I could be in that space more."

Rebecca started taking classes and haunting the woodshop. She received two degrees at graduation—art education plus sculpture and functional art—as well as having the experience of doing a work study in the woodshop. The woodturning did not come back automatically. She had to re-learn the skills. Her first lathe-turned project, ▸

Matching Necklace and Earring, 2020, Mallee burl, resin, dye, pigment

which incorporated legs, took three days on the lathe in a process that she describes as "white-knuckling the gouge." She was covered in shavings and sweating but still felt amazing. She has been obsessed ever since. As a tribute to her father, the lathe he gave her, a Rockwell Delta, has pride of place in her home's living room. Doug acquired it when he was a teenager, and it was Rebecca's first lathe. Now it sits on a pedestal representing filial memories and Rebecca's entrée into her passion and its welcoming community.

Bosch as muse

I can't help but think of Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights* when I consider Rebecca's critters. Bosch was Netherlandish/Dutch and the name DeGroot originates in Holland. Coincidentally, DeGroot translates to large or tall, which may explain Rebecca's unconscious preference for long-legged spiders and spindly spindles. But Bosch's elongated human figures, mile-high steeples, and weird unidentifiable creatures set a precedent for the wildlife that emerges from Rebecca's studio.

Walking Teapot, 2022, Cherry, maple, dye, lacquer, metal reactive paint, 8½" × 6" × 6" (22cm × 15cm × 15cm)

Emerge, 2012, Walnut, cherry, 7" × 11" (18cm × 28cm)

The inaugurator of this line of creativity arose at Kendall. I'm told another story: "An assignment required us to make something with a tambour. Not knowing too much about tambours, I was already determined, before Bob Marsh [the instructor] gave us this assignment, that I wanted to do something on the lathe. He started talking about what a tambour was and I thought, 'Oh God, how am I supposed to do something with a tambour on the lathe?' By the time he was done talking, I had this strange thing like an alien cheeseburger sketched on my paper. It started out as a round box shape with four legs that came down from it like a UFO, and spikes on the outside. And my idea was that the tambour would be continuous around the outside of the bowl, enclosed so that you couldn't see any of the mechanism, but the piece could spin in place. To make it a little more animalistic, I put legs on it and gave the spikes a little more life—the points of the spikes ran in a wave around the piece."

This quotation reflects Rebecca's enthusiasm and sensibility; she is an excited participant in whatever she does. Although the piece, called *Refuge*, wasn't quite finished for the final critique, each element was subsequently sanded to perfection and exhibited in a student exhibition called *Furniture as Danger*.

Rebecca goes on to describe her pieces in the exhibit: "I didn't want to have only one piece, I wanted another. I made an additional bowl where I thought, 'What if I had a bowl with spikes on the inside?' So I made a second bowl with the legs made in a

different fashion, cut out of dowels and then splined together. Spikes pointing up made it a little more interesting. The show was really successful, and I got so into making those legged-creature pieces that I was now obsessed with bringing these things to life." And it's not rocket science to realize that elements that draw a viewer's attention to a piece are going to be more appealing to create, admire, and own.

With the move to Texas, the work morphed from maniacal feats of woodworking and extraterrestrials to what might be called functional. Functional in the sense that the forms are familiar—tea and coffee pots—but since wood has never been a preferred material for brewing tea or holding coffee, Rebecca's are for display only. Each has a quirky character—a handle with knobs, a lid with a swoosh—with arthropodal legs that raise them high off a surface. There is a strong sense that they'd walk away when your back is turned.

Each has a quirky character—a handle with knobs, a lid with a swoosh—with arthropodal legs that raise them high off a surface. There is a strong sense that they'd walk away when your back is turned.

Walking Bowl, 2021, Cherry, walnut, ebonizing solution of vinegar and steel wool, 3" × 7" × 10" (8cm × 18cm × 25cm)

Pieces with solid color have a shiny finish that is as unblemished as new car enamel. Combinations of wood grain and painted exterior, in her seedling series, create startling illusions of what's inside the object or beneath the surface. The flora that emerge from the vessels' necks remind me of time-lapse photography documentaries of plants breaking the earth's crust to bob and weave in search of the sun.

Tool change

A new range of images now joins the teapots on stilts on Rebecca's Instagram account. When she was a teenager and happened to be sketching while waiting in a tattoo parlor, a tattooist suggested that she sell her images for application as tattoos. She was keen to become more involved in tattooing, but her mother and grandmother nixed the idea. Nevertheless, the inclination sat in the back of Rebecca's mind and resurfaced in Houston. A series of encounters eventually led to her becoming an apprentice, and initially her day was bookended with teaching ▸

Reach, 2016, Maple, walnut, 9½" × 5" × 10" (24cm × 13cm × 25cm)

Mini Aquifers, 2021-2022, Maple burl, resin, polymer clay, toothpicks, dye, spray paint, Each approximately 6" × 3" × 2" (15cm × 8cm × 5cm)

from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and tattooing from 5:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. She has been inking for three years now and feels that there is much more to learn and practice—as with any craft—but her work is characterized by her preference for the colors that she wears about her person.

Rebecca now concentrates full time on woodturning and tattooing. She loves the latter as much as the former and feels very comfortable with her fellow employees and customers. Her extroverted nature is attractive to clients, and her creative talent could place her amongst the significant contemporary designers in body art.

Her teaching now is dedicated to the arena of woodturning. In March 2024, she was a demonstrator at TurnFest in Australia, where her walking artifacts—mushrooms and thin-stemmed goblets—were featured as well as techniques for carving, burning, and air brushing. In May, she was invited to be a guest of honor at École Escoulen, France, for Les Petits Journées d'Aiguines 2024 (Small Days of Aiguines). And she will be a featured demonstrator at this year's AAW International Symposium in Saint Paul, Minnesota, June 12-15, 2025. It is clear that the spirit and quirkiness of Rebecca DeGroot and her woodturned *objets* provide inspiration for audiences around the world. ■

For more, follow Rebecca on Instagram, @rebecca_degroot.

Dauntless, 2016, Maple, rosewood, 4" × 2" × 7" (10cm × 5cm × 18cm)

Walking Teapot (donation to SWAT raffle), 2022, Maple, walnut, dye, acrylic paint, 5" × 6" × 6" (13cm × 15cm × 15cm)

Ascent, 2016, Maple, walnut, dye, 15" × 5" × 5" (38cm × 13cm × 13cm)

D Wood designed and made furniture to earn a Diploma in Crafts and Design at Sheridan College in Canada and an MFA at the Rhode Island School of Design. In 2012, she earned a PhD in Design Studies from University of Otago. D is the editor of Craft is Political *(Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021).*

What's in a Name?

The 2024 Virtual WIT eXchange

WIT EXCHANGE VIRTUAL 2024

The word *eXchange* is the key to the magic that has brought hundreds of women together, as it emphasizes *process* over completed works.

The name, 2024 Virtual WIT (Women in Turning) eXchange, sounds like some kind of dream, maybe a comedy class, a bartering arrangement, or...? If you have been following the WIT eXchanges over the last several years, you already know that women from all over the world sign up to participate in a unique collaborative project. The word *eXchange* is the key to the magic that has brought hundreds of women together, as it emphasizes *process* over completed works. It encourages community-building and support for women's learning (and trying) something new.

By definition, *eXchange* can refer to several things, including the act of giving and receiving something in return; a visiting swap, as when people from different countries do each other's jobs or go to each other's schools; a brief conversation or argument; and more. All of these definitions were considered when AAW's WIT committee chose the word to describe its annual collaborative event.

The women who created the plan for the first WIT eXchange imagined an event that fostered creativity, grouping women with different skillsets together to share (exchange) their skills and knowledge. These women would come from different backgrounds and locations. They would learn to work together as a team, moving forward through a making process in short sequences, through conversations, the occasional argument, and, of course, compromise, ultimately creating connections, lasting friendships, and personal growth. The WIT eXchange started with individuals searching for creative inspiration and knowledge and, by design, became a safe haven filled with women openly exchanging hopes, dreams, and fears. The event is an opportunity to support each other as we learn the processes necessary to create a project based on two assigned words intended to provoke creativity.

How it works

Participants are divided by their self-described skill levels and put into skill-balanced teams of three. They are then given two randomly selected words, a noun and a modifier, and tasked with coming together to design and create a project inspired by those words. Some ▸

MidWest Punx
(Noele DeSafey, Daryl Gray, Mary Arp)

Magnificent Personality, 2024, Maple, purpleheart, oak, cherry, SpectraPly, fabric, electric motor, wire, clay, paint, dye, stain, marker, crystal button, 15" × 17" × 14" (38cm × 43cm × 36cm)

Wild Roses (Angela Gunn, Debra Higley, Lynn Jordan)

Relaxed Generosity, 2024, Apricot, aspen, carob, cherry, elm, mahogany, maple, myrtle, padauk, purpleheart, redbud, polymer clay, acrylic paint, mica, oil and wax finishes, sticks and stones, 8¼" × 12½" × 12" (21cm × 32cm × 30cm)

of the 2024 participants were eXchange alumni, while others were complete newbies. The teams are encouraged to get to know each other, creating lasting bonds as they work together brainstorming, creating, facing challenges, sharing knowledge, assembling, photographing, and telling the story of their collaborations.

The eXchange process is designed to uplift everyone involved. Egos are checked at the door. Fear is squashed as participants become open to the creative process, allowing themselves to become vulnerable as they ask for and receive help when needed. The result is a growing community that supports each member, not just during the eXchange but as individuals continue their woodturning journeys.

Why WIT?

The advantages of women in woodturning are evident at every level. For one, the number of women in woodturning is increasing, and we believe this influx is having a positive impact on turned work in general. Men and women bring different perspectives, and both are influenced when challenged. Collaboration challenges our ideas and offers the opportunity to experiment and venture beyond our creative safety zones. The process of working collaboratively stimulates new ideas, which benefits all woodturning.

Additionally, more women are stepping up for leadership roles in the AAW and its chapters. Many of these women are eXchange alumni or have been inspired by other women in leadership roles. At the chapter level, WIT liaisons are working to strengthen clubs by encouraging local or regional groups to

The eXchange process is designed to uplift everyone involved. Egos are checked at the door. Fear is squashed as participants become open to the creative process.

Spirit Squirrels (Linda Ferber, Ellen Starr, Rebecca Reuter)

Spirit Eternal, 2024, Poplar, willow, cherry, acrylic paint, 9½" × 8" (24cm × 20cm)

High Speed Steel Magnolias (Karen Ricotta, Ris Fleming, Beth Lockamy)

Window Negative, 2024, Maple, curly maple, mahogany, yellowheart, cedar, magnifying glass, 12" × 15" × 17" (30cm × 38cm × 43cm)

The CrossWITs (Marie Anderson, Mary Hansen, Leanna Pierson)

Significant Silliness, 2024, Maple burl, Osage orange, basswood, poplar, copper, glass, air-dry clay, tulle, acrylic paints, India ink, goldleaf, glitter, 18" × 9½" × 9" (46cm × 24cm × 23cm)

Northern Gigglers (Linda Ferber, Vilma Blankowitz, Kathy Gilbert)

Angular Communication, 2024, Birch, acrylic, wood, 9" × 17" × 12" (23cm × 43cm × 30cm)

organize eXchanges of their own using the model the WIT committee created. We intend to offer an eXchange leadership class sometime after the AAW symposium, so stay tuned for that!

Even without official WIT liaisons, any chapter can host a collaborative initiative to further engage its members. You could start with the words used in this year's eXchange projects shown in this article (denoted as the italicized titles in the captions). What would these word pairs inspire you to create? But do not limit yourself to what you see here. Do not discount any ideas. Grab some other people from your club and get their interpretation of the same words. The playfulness of collaborative projects creates a fun environment that can infuse your local group with new energy. If you throw in the benefit of strengthening relationships, you have a recipe for reviving a club that may still be suffering from the isolation that Covid inflicted upon us.

Learn more

To learn more about AAW's WIT initiative, visit **tiny.cc/WIT** (URL is case-sensitive). We are in the process of putting together a syllabus to teach the eXchange process via Zoom to local leaders. If you would like to learn more about the eXchange process to use in your club or regionally, please advise us to be notified of the class schedule. Contact information is available on our webpage. And if you missed the original broadcast of the 2024 Virtual WIT eXchange Presentation of Projects, you can access the recording there, too. ■

The WIT committee is deeply grateful to the sponsors of the 2024 Virtual WIT eXchange: Carl and Robin Jacobson, owners of Niles Bottle Stoppers (nilesbottlestoppers.com) and Chris and Christy Caliendo, owners of Easy Wood Tools (easywoodtools.com). They made generous in-kind donations to this year's participants, and their support means the world to all of us. Thank You!

—Marie Anderson and Linda Ferber

Flower Force (Margaret Stiles, Iris Laven, Sheila Balzer)

Comfortable Force, 2024, Wood, wire, rocks, paint, 24" × 24" (61cm × 61cm)

WITty IDEA (Katy Berkowitz, Jessica Edwards, Tara Primeaux)

Curving Idea, 2024, Maple, walnut, padauk, acrylic paint, LED lights, 24" × 16" (61cm × 41cm)

STEMpeding Turners (Emily Johnson, Liz Donati, H. Louise Butler)

Robust Community, 2024, Maple, cherry, mahogany, 5" × 18" × 8" (13cm × 46cm × 20cm)

Off-Kilter Turners (Robin McIntyre, Noele DeSafey, Laura Rodriguez)

Happiness Diagonal, 2024, Cherry, maple, poplar, acrylic fluid paint, 10" × 9" × 8" (25cm × 23cm× 20cm)

Members' Gallery

Brent English, Wisconsin

I've been a compulsive maker since I was a little boy. So far, this journey has led me through leathercraft, machining, blacksmithing, flat woodworking, and woodturning. I turn mostly local hardwoods. Southwest Wisconsin is a wood-rich region with oaks, walnut, cherry, ash, maples, and the ubiquitous boxelder. Most of the pieces shown here are from the early 2000s; my output has slowed a bit since then, and what I do make is usually given away.

I focus first on form. Richard Raffan's book, *The Art of Turned Bowls* (Taunton Press, 2008) should be in every turner's shop. Secondly, I live by John Jordan's oft-repeated line: "Life is too short to turn crappy wood." Lastly, my motto is, "Done right is better than done fast." Most of us are making potential heirlooms. One hundred years from now, no one will care how quickly you turned it. To keep it out of the Good Will donation box, do a good job. If the wood has a story to tell (did Grandpa really plant that tree?), it will mean even more. Your work is how you will be remembered by those who never met you.

Sunset, 2005, Spalted silver maple, forged iron, oak fencepost, polyurethane, 17" × 13" × 5" (43cm × 33cm × 13cm)

Beautiful Balloon, 2004, White oak, Minwax® Antique Oil, 5" × 6" (13cm × 15cm)

Now I Are a Turner, 2002, Spalted silver maple, Minwax® Antique Oil, 5" × 11" (13cm × 28cm)

Will's Burl, 2004, White oak burl, Minwax® Antique Oil, 9" × 15" (23cm × 38cm)

This Old Boat, 2005, Boxelder, Rust-Oleum® paint, heat, 3½" × 7½" (9cm × 19cm)

Deb's Needles, 2006, Cocobolo, ebony, wax, 10½" × 1" × 1" (27cm × 25mm × 25mm)

Paul D. May, Michigan

I consider myself primarily a turner of segmented, or polychromatic, work, who tries to incorporate compound angles into my pieces in order to create unique features. I am a bit of a geometry geek and find this type of embellishment challenging, which in turn keeps me motivated. As an organic chemist for over thirty-five years (now retired), I have always enjoyed making things that are new and interesting. Using the natural colors of the wood instead of using stains or dyes adds to the artistic interest in my work. ▸

For more, follow Paul on Instagram, @michiganturner59.

Trinity, 2024, Cherry, maple, yellowheart, pau ferro, granadillo, Ack's Abrasive Paste, carnauba wax, 7" × 10" (18cm × 25cm)

A Ribbon Runs Through It, 2024, Cherry, walnut, maple, yellowheart, pau ferro, Ack's Abrasive Paste, carnauba wax, 5" × 8¼" (13cm × 21cm)

Staircase Study #1, 2024, Cherry, walnut, maple, Ack's Abrasive Paste, carnauba wax, 4¾" × 6" (12cm × 15cm)

Crosstalk, 2024, Sepele, cherry, maple, chakte viga, boire, Gaboon ebony, Ack's Abrasive Paste, carnauba wax, 4" × 4" (10cm × 10cm)

Overlaminated, 2024, Cherry, maple, sapele, Ack's Abrasive Paste, carnauba wax, 4¼" × 6½" (11cm × 17cm)

In Balance, 2023, Cherry, avodire, chakte viga, granadillo, leopardwood, Ack's Abrasive Paste, carnauba wax, 5¼" × 9½" (13cm × 24cm)

Stewart Furini, England

I began woodturning regularly over a dozen years ago as an antidote to my day job as an English teacher and assistant head. It gave me a creative outlet and an opportunity to leave behind the tensions of the working day—teenagers are tiring!

My turning took a new direction about seven years ago, when I first added texture and color to a bowl. It was a revelatory experience. It led to my first open house exhibition, my first sales, and my first YouTube video. This led to many more videos, national and international demonstrating, magazine articles, and teaching.

I like adding patterns and depth with coloring techniques and try to avoid symmetry for some unknown reason. I enjoy using grinders, rotary tools, routers, pyrography machines, and airbrushes to embellish my work but am equally happy with the effects from adding color with paper towels. My personal challenge is to branch out from wide-rimmed shallow bowls.

The teaching and demonstrating are now a much larger part of my life, following early retirement. I get as much pleasure from seeing others' enjoyment and delight at unleashing their creativity as I do from my own coloring and texturing. My guiding principles are that the experience of turning should be allowed to include play and experiment and failure—as long as something is learned from any failure!

For more, visit stewartfuriniwoodturning.co.uk.

SYMPOSIUM DEMONSTRATOR IN SAINT PAUL!

British turner Stewart Furini will be a demonstrator at AAW's International Woodturning Symposium in Saint Paul, Minnesota, June 12-15, 2025, where he will share his insights on a variety of topics. Don't miss this chance to learn from Stewart, live and in person! For the latest details, visit aawsymposium.org.

Natural-Edged Column, 2022, Spirit stains, rainbow wax, gloss acrylic lacquer, 11" × 3" (28cm × 8cm)

Pink and Black, 2017, Sycamore, acrylic paint, acrylic lacquer, 2" × 11" (5cm × 28cm)

Sea Wave, 2019, Norway maple, spirit stains, acrylic paint, gloss acrylic lacquer, 4" × 10" (10cm × 25cm)

Fluted Vase, 2022, Macrocarpa, spirit stains, 7" × 3" (18cm × 8cm)

Golden Holes, 2018, Beech, ebonizing lacquer, metallic gold airbrush paint, 1" × 12" (25mm × 30cm)

Pathways 2, 2024, Sycamore, pyrography, texturing, spirit stains, 1" × 8" (25mm × 20cm)

George Martin, Minnesota

Ten years ago, I decided to take up woodturning as an art and a way to make friends. I retired from being a pastor. I did not, however, give up my work as a biblical scholar. So on any given day, I spend time both in my shop and at my desk.

In my turning, I tend to focus on simplicity but with some artistic touches. Belonging to my local club in Minnesota has been a true joy. A small sub-group in our club works together to improve our skills in artistic work. But I also love the look of the grain that appears because it is foundational to the wood itself.

Finding Color (collaboration with Don Pohlman), 2024, Elm, acrylic paint, Mahoney's Walnut Oil, 1⅝" × 3½" (4cm × 9cm)

Romance Swiss-Made Music Box, 2023, Maple, Mahoney's Walnut Oil, music box movement, curved glass magnifier, 5¾" × 3½" (15cm × 9cm)

The Leftover Bowl, 2024, Maple burl, Mahoney's Walnut Oil, 1¾" × 11½" × 7" (4cm × 29cm × 18cm)

From an Old Barn, 2024, Norway pine, Mahoney's Walnut Oil, 2⅜" × 4¾" × 4¾" (6cm × 12cm × 12cm)

Jonathan Lichter, New York

There are different approaches and concepts in seeking to create artistic beauty in wood. Next to my lathe, I keep a quote from Leonardo da Vinci: "Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication." This is my guiding principle. My objective is, through practice, to advance my skill as a turner to enable me to reflect the innate beauty in a piece of wood without external adornment or embellishment. Admittedly, there are more creative and elaborate approaches than mine. Each has its own rationale and validity. I work with wood from logs I find in my neighborhood and its parks—typically oak, maple, cherry, birch, walnut, elm, and mulberry. ■

Natural-Edge Bowl, 2024, Cherry, Waterlox finish, carnauba wax, 6" × 11" (15cm × 28cm)

(*Left*) *Vase*, 2016, White mulberry, Waterlox finish, carnauba wax, 11½" × 5" (29cm × 13cm)

(*Right*) *Spice Box*, 2016, Oak, Waterlox finish, carnauba wax, 8" × 1¼" (20cm × 32mm)

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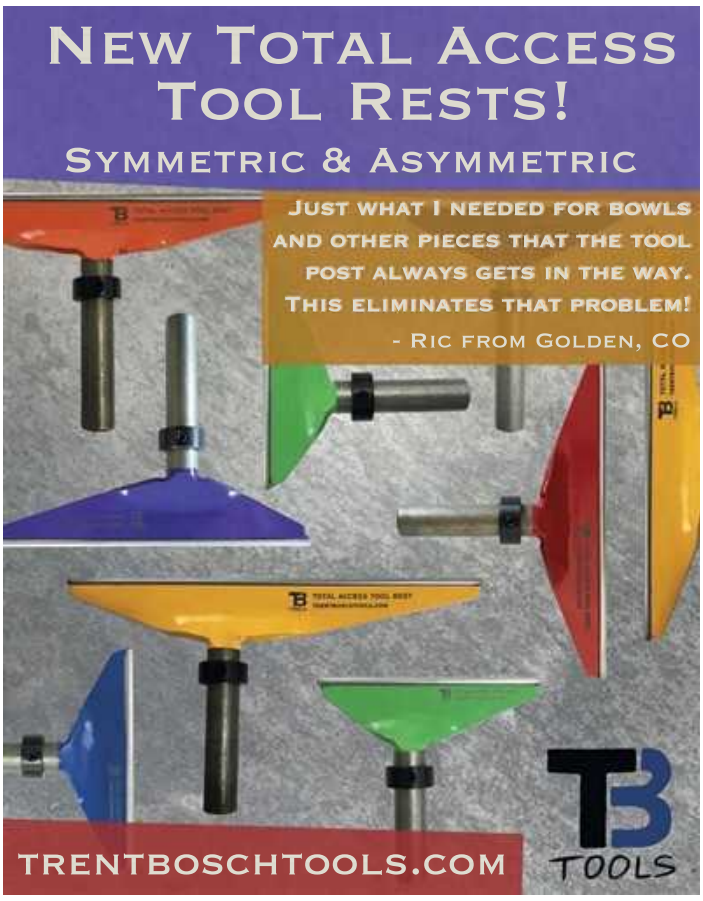
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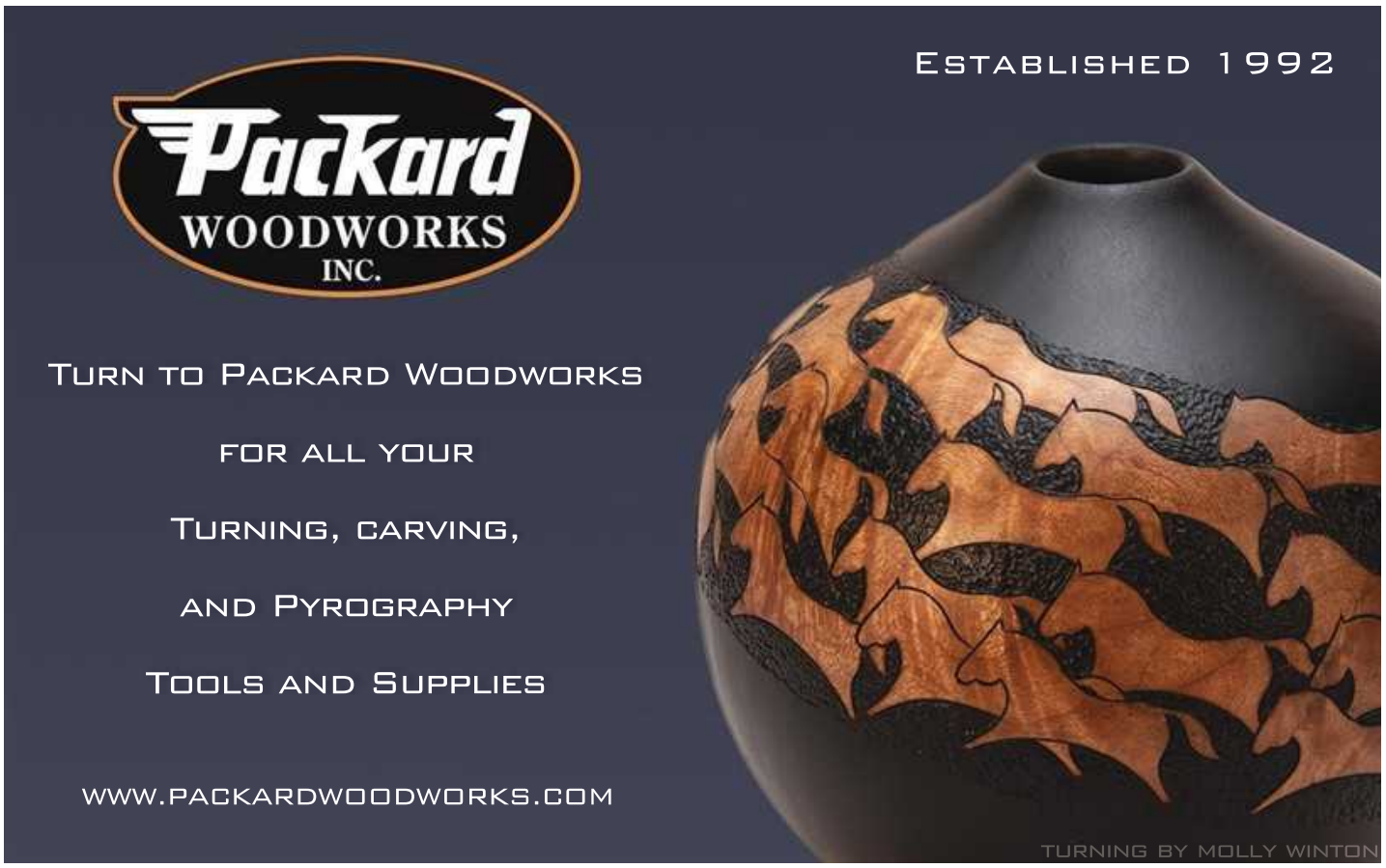
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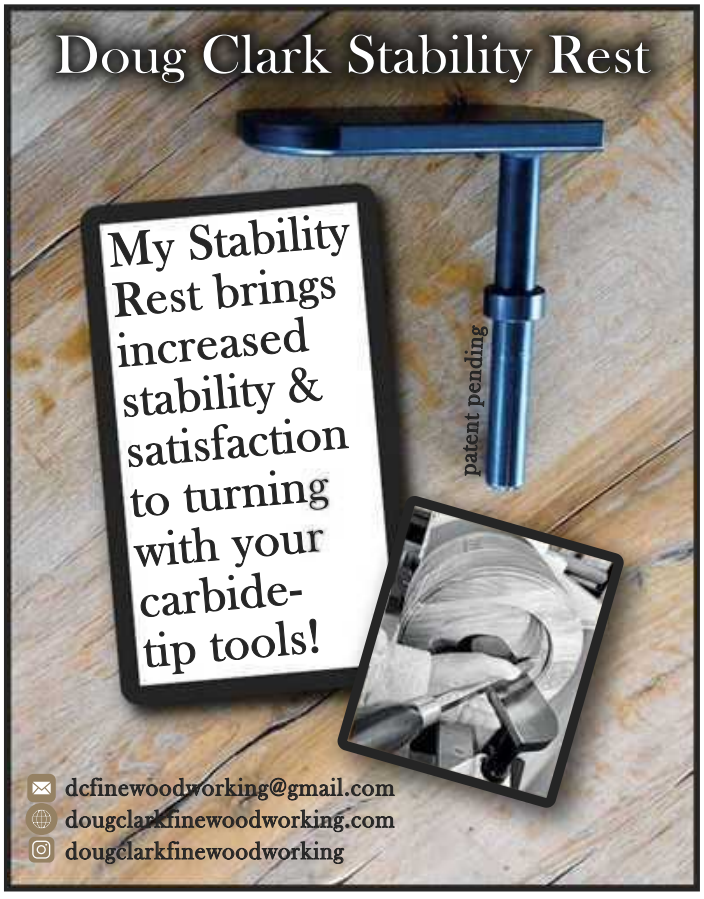

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SAMMY LONG MISSISSIPPI

From the beginning of my joyful woodturning adventure, my wife Maureen has been my helper, always thinking of round things that can be made on the lathe. She suggested I try my hand at a delicate parasol, and after overcoming a few project challenges, I am happy with the results. I knew the canopy would have to be turned thin to have the fine appearance needed, and I knew right away that I wanted to pierce the canopy using what I had learned from one of my inspirations, Binh Pho.

Inside This Issue!

Award-winning woodturner Sammy Long shares his process of turning and piercing a parasol in an informative article on page 30.

Parasols, 2024, Cherry, Danish oil, Each: 8" × 7" (20cm × 18cm)

Photo: Clayton Thigpen